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THE
BIRTH OF
CALABAD
RICHARD BOVEY



Alvin Bigby

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LAUNCELOT AND GUENEVERE
A POEM IN DRAMAS

III. THE BIRTH OF GALAHAD

BY RICHARD HOVEY

LAUNCELOT AND GUENEVERE

A POEM IN DRAMAS

I. THE QUEST OF MERLIN

A Masque

II. THE MARRIAGE OF GUENEVERE

A Tragedy

III. THE BIRTH OF GALAHAD

A Romantic Drama

IV. TALIESIN

A Masque

V. THE HOLY GRAAL AND OTHER

FRAGMENTS

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THE BIRTH OF CALABAD

RICHARD BOVEY



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THE BIRTH OF GALAHAD



A ROMANTIC DRAMA

PERSONS.

ARTHUR, *King of Britain.*

LAUNCELOT, } *his Generals.*

GALAHULT, }

ECTOR DE MARIS, *younger brother of*

Launcelot,

} *Other Knights
of the
Round Table.*

LIONEL, *cousin to Launcelot,*

BORS DE GANYS, *younger brother of Lionel,*

DINADAN, *friend of Tristram of Lyonesse,*

MERLIN.

DAGONET, *the Queen's Fool.*

GALAHAD, *a new-born child.*

LUCIUS, *Emperor of Rome.*

BURSA, *a Prefect,*

PUBLIUS, *a Senator,* } *Roman Courtiers.*

VOCONIUS, *a Poet,*

VARRO, *a Roman Captain.*

LINUS, *his Lieutenant.*

THE POPE.

GUENEVERE, *Queen of Britain.*

YLEN, *daughter of King Pelles.*

DAME BRISEN, *a retainer of Princess Ylen.*

METELLA, *favorite of the Emperor, niece of Publius.*

VOCONIA, *sister of Voconius.*

Messengers, Knights, Soldiers, Senators, Ladies, Courtiers,
Monks, Players, Dancers, Slaves, and Attendants.

THE BIRTH OF GALAHAD.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *A Garden in Lyonesse. Beds of the earlier vegetables, such as lettuce, cabbages, young onions, and radishes, mingled with primroses and daffodils, and other early flowers. Some of the beds covered with straw, which DAME BRISEN and DAGONET are busy removing, to expose them to the warmth of the sunny spring morning. The garden walks lead back to a doorway in a small castle, where a plum-tree in full blossom is trained against the castle walls. In another part, a shrine, with an image of the Virgin. The garden is encompassed by a wall, parts of which are in view; and through a gate in this wall the ocean is seen in the distance. On the other side of the gate from the castle, a turret with a spiral stair is built against the wall, overtopping it and looking on the sea.*

DAME BRISEN (*crooning*).

Old and bent and a bag of bones!
Kisses for maidens, kicks for crones!
But never so bonny and brisk a bride
In the dark of the moon when the demons ride!

DAGONET. "Demons" and "the dark of the moon" — Oh, Lord! Let's think of something cheerful. (*Sings.*)

The King sat down to a venison pasty,
Burned his mouth because he was hasty —

[*Breaks off and looks at DAME BRISEN quizzically.*]

DAME BRISEN (*crooning*).

Mandrake and martagan!
A goodly brew
For the —

[*The rest is lost in a mutter.*]

DAGONET. Ugh! Who would think she was but gathering herbs for a pottage? . . . Dame Brisen, the country folk say you are a witch.

DAME BRISEN. Witch enough to bewilder *them*, Dagonet. Gather you your strawberries, and meddle not with an old woman's whims. Weed the patch as you go.

DAGONET. That ever I should come to be a puller of weeds!

DAME BRISEN. You are wrong to say so. Would you have a common kern here, to be a partaker of the Queen's secret?

[DAGONET *drops his basket, springs lightly up into the turret, glances rapidly over the wall, and up and down the road, and lightly leaps back into the garden.*]

DAGONET. The Queen has no secret, — with a wall

but a rod away, and whoever you please passing behind it.

DAME BRISEN. Well, well.

DAGONET. Besides, if we keep up the trick to each other, we shall lie with the better grace to the world. We shall have no superfluous habit of the truth to forget. So let it be your lady, the Princess Ylen, even between us, and no word of secrets or the Queen! Old Merlin has a nose like an elephant, and can smell a thought from here to Camelot, before you have spoken it.

DAME BRISEN. Nay, you can tell me naught of Merlin. In the old days — But the sap's out o' that long ago . . .

DAGONET. When will the child be born?

DAME BRISEN. Under the next moon.

DAGONET. And when did the Princess' husband die? When a man is to have a posthumous heir, he can't be too careful of the date of his death.

DAME BRISEN. It was nigh on Michaelmas of last year the Prince died.

DAGONET (*counting on his fingers*). Oh, that I had given myself in my youth to the mathematics!

DAME BRISEN. Tangle your brains no more about it. The child will pass for his . . . I cannot keep from thinking of the Queen and the Princess in their childhood. You remember them.

DAGONET. As well as I remember my first top. I spun it and they spun me. . . . Oh, the Virgin!

DAME BRISEN. What now?

DAGONET. I have put all the weeds into the basket with the strawberries. God never meant me to be a clodhopper.

[Runs up again into the turret, where he sits twirling his bauble, and looking out idly over the wall.]

DAME BRISEN. I saw them both born. They are within three months of an age. The kingdoms of their fathers lay side by side; that was before King Arthur had made all the kingdoms into one. There were Druids still in the fastnesses in those days.

DAGONET. Yonder 's a horseman far down the road. He rides too fast for a clown.

DAME BRISEN. By the mistletoe, but they were a pair of madcap little queenlets! Untamed as young hawks —

DAGONET. And inseparable as bread and butter.

DAME BRISEN. When the lady Guenevere was not at the court of our good King Pelles, then was the lady Ylen with your mistress at Cameliard. They would have it no other way. And it was ever Guenevere that led in the adventure, and it was ever Ylen that led in the escape.

Enter YLEN. She stands for an instant in the doorway, and then comes slowly down the walks, plucking primroses. She pays no heed to the others, and they do not perceive her.

DAGONET. Yonder horseman wears the King's livery; perhaps he brings news from the armies.

DAME BRISEN. Nay, but that would gladden the heart of Guenevere. Day long she frets for tidings of the war.

DAGONET. Not the war so much as the warrior.

DAME BRISEN. Since the King crossed the waters with his knights, you would say the sea rolled between her and her peace.

DAGONET. He 'll never keep up that pace when he gets to the foot of the hill. I 'll down to meet him.

[Leaps over the wall and disappears.]

DAME BRISEN. And leave me to finish your work for you, vagabond.

[As she rises and turns, with her basket in one hand and DAGONET'S in the other, she meets YLEN.]

Good morrow, my lady.

YLEN. Good morrow, Brisen. What a day of spring!

The wind comes with a touch so like a kiss
I almost blush and startle; and the knit sense
Opens like a flower in the warm air.
Go call the Queen; this will revive her more
Than all the service of a score of us.

DAME BRISEN. Ay, madam, she stifles, shut indoor.

YLEN. What chiefly

Lays waste her spirit is the barren longing
To look on Launcelot. But to hear his name,
She will hang upon your words like a great bee.

She swears, when all is done, she will not stay
One hour ere she set out to join him.

DAME BRISEN. Well,
She has not so long to wait as she has waited.

YLEN. Yes, I shall soon have a child . . . by proxy.
I wonder
Will it be boy or girl.

[*Exit DAME BRISEN. YLEN wanders about the
garden idly, singing.*]

And if he should come again
In the old glad way,
I should smile and take his hand.
What were there to say?

[*Pauses with her face against the gate, looking out
over the sea.*]

I should close my eyes and smile,
And my soul would be
Like the peace of summer noons
Beside the sea.

Enter GUENEVERE, from the castle. A pause.

GUENEVERE. My heart is with the sailors on that bark,
Far out to sea, whose sails shine like a star,
Bound for the south — oh, to be free! to stab
This turnkey Policy, break prison, flee,
Untrammelled, fearless, irresponsible —
And let tongues wag that will!

YLEN. The place is pleasant.
Since needs must we be prisoners, methinks
Our jail no hardship.

GUENEVERE. Oh, were Launcelot here,
I could content me, were 't a hermitage,
And think myself the mistress of a world.

YLEN. And I, whose lord and lover bivouacs
By camp-fires whence no tidings ever come,
With the unreturning armies of the dead,
What bird of all the heaven could lend me wings
Would serve me? So I grow content, perhaps,
With all too little, seeing that what I would
Is more than mortal can.

GUENEVERE. Forgive me!
My loss is loud and fretful, and forgets
Your deeper, dumb, irrevocable grief.
You are my savior: you have all been kind,
Gentle and true, Sir Tristram when he lent
This bower to us, and your Brisen, too,
And Dagonet — a good world, after all,
That has such hearts in it! Oh, Ylen, Ylen!
I think there never was so good a woman —

YLEN (*sings*).

“We two have wandered on the hills
And braved the winds together.”

Oh, dear my Guenevere, is it so much
That we should just be friends? And what's a friend
That does not feel a joy that friendship needs
The will made deed to lean on?

GUENEVERE. Such a friend
Is oftener dreamed than real.

YLEN. Nor is this

So hard a thing I do. For, sooth, I need
Something to love — nay, were it but a bird.
My lord is not; you grow away from me
In the great world I have no heart to enter;
My father dreams of Graals and mystic visions,
And nears the end. I never had a child.
And I begin to long for yours as if
I were indeed its mother.

GUENEVERE. Ah, but . . .
You do not know the mystery of it all;
A life within your life — a part of you
And yet not you — a soul — think, Ylen, think —
A soul, a spark struck from divinity,
And caught in you as tow to smoulder in
Until the free air fan it to a flame —
Shut, as the Host is in the tabernacle,
Within you — Oh, it makes a sanctuary
Of every inch of you, a temple where
The soul is priest and may not leave the altar
One instant! The whole earth is hushed and cancelled.
Out of the shadow of the brooding presence
No escape anywhere — ocean, sky, air, filled
With the universal awe. I live in awe.
I am become a wonder to myself,
A place inhabited by secret powers,
A wilderness wherein I wander, lost,
Among dim, alien shapes, forgotten gods,
That work out their uncomprehended aims
And ask no leave of me.

DAGONET (*without*). Ho, there! News!

GUENEVERE. What now?

YLEN. It is the fool.

Enter DAGONET and a MESSENGER.

DAGONET. A messenger from the Court, your Majesty.

GUENEVERE. What news?

DAGONET. A caskful at the least. Broach, broach! We are all dry as Saracens. I could drink the stalest small beer of court gossip with a relish. A mad jest would be sack to me. Any old news! We that live in the country —

GUENEVERE. Peace, Fool; it is his cue.

MESSENGER. First, madam, Merlin Greets you with health and loyal salutation. Bidding you have no care of things of state, Seeing the matters of your regency, Whereof he is the minister, continue smoothly and fair. What else imports you know With more detail, you may at your good leisure O'erread in these. [*Giving packet.*]

GUENEVERE. No tidings of the wars?

MESSENGER. A post from France brings word the King has met The Romans at the Loire and vanquished them; The happy issue of the day being due Chiefly to Launcelot.

GUENEVERE. Ay, what of him?

MESSENGER. He was the first knight in the world before,

But now he hath no rival. Madam, a poet
Should tell his deeds, not I, who have no language
To parallel his action. His appearance
Made the ranks break before him; they that stayed,
Like stubborn oaks, were blasted with the shock
Of his great battle-axe, which played like lightning,
Here, there, now at the centre, now the flanks,
Cracking the cloud of war.

GUENEVERE. Methinks I see him! —

YLEN. Madam, be calm . . . What of the others?

MESSENGER. Alas!

Sir Godmar, the Lord Marshal, that old soldier,
Who hath commanded since King Uther's time,
Is slain. At that the field was almost lost,
And had been, but for Launcelot, whose coming
Made them whose courage failed at Godmar's fall
Take heart again and conquer. Save for this,
No loss of note except Sir Dinadan
Who is made prisoner.

YLEN. What, Dinadan?

The merry Dinadan? A sorry jest.

MESSENGER. The Romans have retreated to the
Rhone,

Whither our armies follow. For his prowess
The King has named Sir Launcelot general
In Godmar's place.

GUENEVERE. Why, then, he has command
Of all the armies!

MESSENGER. Ay, madam, next the King.

YLEN. You bring good news. But we forget your journey. Dagonet, look you to his entertainment.

DAGONET. Now it's my turn . . . Shall we go in? . . . What's the last mad prank on the Severn? Who has made Sir Kaye ridiculous? Or no, God made him that. Which of the maids of honor — now the cat's away the —

MESSENGER. One more commission. Merlin prays
the Queen
To read this scroll.

[*Bows and exit with DAGONET.*]

GUENEVERE. Oh! . . .
Fate waits upon his will. No enterprise
So hopeless, be it in peace or be it in war,
But his adhesion sureties its success!

YLEN. Holá! Holá!

GUENEVERE. But to be fellows with him
Makes lesser men invincible.

YLEN. How Tristram
Will chafe that he must rest inglorious here
While such brave deeds are doing!

GUENEVERE. Launcelot
Holds him his only peer; but the heavens fight
With Launcelot!

YLEN. And to Tristram they are dark;
As now when he must stay and serve King Mark.

GUENEVERE. The more is Launcelot's glory that
alone
He is sufficient. Oh, it is strange

That one, the gentlest heart in all the world,
Should be so mighty and so terrible.

YLEN. What is more gentle than the delicate air?
And yet its storms uproot the rugged oak.
And what is softer than the yielding wave?
Yet floods and tempests lurk there. What more kindly
Than the warm fire, which, being unleashed, devours
A city or a forest in a night? . . .
I pray you, read the scroll that Merlin sent.
I am curious.

GUENEVERE. What mystery is this?
A riddle — for the harp.

YLEN. Nay, read it out.

GUENEVERE (*reads*).

“Three things are hard to follow;
The flight of a gull in the mist,
A trail in running water,
And the secret of a woman.

“Three things it is useless to baffle;
The rise of the tide,
The courses of the stars,
And the thought in the heart of a woman.

“Three things are a witness how vain is the craft of man;
The might of the sea in storm,
The silences of the night,
And the birth of a child.

“I, Merlin, am old; I have seen many things;
But one thing have I not seen,
That taking counsel prevailed against days or doom
Or the desire of a woman.

"The stars in the sky have said me a rune;
The leaves rustled with knowledge,
The air trembled with tidings; }
I was aware of a dream in the darkness.

"He that is mightier than his father, yet not so mighty;
He that is wiser than his father, yet not so wise;
He that is holier than his father, yet not so holy;
Such an one stood before me in the night.

"A lily is known by three things;
It is white and a maiden,
Its odors are elfin music in the garden,
But no fruit comes of it."

He knows.

YLEN. How can he know?

GUENEVERE. He knows, he knows.

YLEN. Nay, perhaps he but spreads a snare for you.

GUENEVERE. He has strange power to see men's
 hidden souls.

His look can make your thoughts startle and shrink
Like naked things.

YLEN. Let me look at the scroll . . .
It's partly pat and partly in the air;
Words, words ; or I am dull.

GUENEVERE. No, no ; he clouds
His meaning in a mystery. That's his way . . .
The worst is, to do nothing . . . What he knows
He knows. What he will do, he will do. And there's
No help but silence and to wait the event.

[The scene closes.]

SCENE II. *In the Valley of the Rhone. The Camp.
Before the Tent of LAUNCELOT. LIONEL and
ECTOR, playing at dice, BORS, and VARRO, a
prisoner.*

ECTOR. I'll play no more. The Devil is on your
side.

LIONEL. As you will, cousin. . . . Will you lay a
wager, sir?

VARRO. You mock me. I am a prisoner, dis-
furnished

Of aught to play with, and, till I am ransomed,
Cut off from my estate.

LIONEL. O sir, your word
Is good enough for me to gamble with.

BORS. Think not so meanly of us, as that we
Should jest at a brave foeman overthrown.
We would forget you are our prisoner
And have you too forget it.

LIONEL. If you lose,
I'll rest your creditor till you are free.

VARRO. Why then I take your offer heartily;
And, win or lose, I am your debtor still
For courtesy. . . . A hundred sesterces!

LIONEL. Deuces.

VARRO. Eleven.

LIONEL. Yours.

VARRO. Again. . . . the same.

LIONEL. Quits.

VARRO. Double.

LIONEL. Mine.

VARRO. Three hundred.

LIONEL. Mine again.

VARRO. A thousand sesterces against your chestnut!

LIONEL. That's twice her value. Done.

VARRO. A double six.

LIONEL. The mare is yours.

ECTOR. Look! By the Holy Cross,
There's Dinadan.

BORS. Where?

ECTOR. Yonder, with Launcelot.

LIONEL. What, Dinadan back again? Ho, Dinadan!

Enter LAUNCELOT and DINADAN.

ECTOR. How'scaped you?

BORS. Welcome to the camp again!

DINADAN. Oh, comrades!

VARRO. What a fellowship these knights are!

DINADAN. O Lord, O Lord! I am bruised from
head to foot.

First, I am sore with sleeping in the prison —

They have villainous prisons in these Roman towns —

Next, sore with riding the jade that brought me hither —

She had a backbone like the Alps — and last,

Sorest of all with the crack you have given my ribs.

BORS. Why, welcome, then!

DINADAN. Oh, Bors, be pitiful!

LAUNCELOT. Varro, I have found you a true man,
and I

Am glad and loth to set you free. But go;

You are the ransom of Sir Dinadan;
I have exchanged you for him. They that brought
him

Wait to conduct you back with them. Good bye!

LIONEL. What, free so soon? Come, we must find
your mare.

ECTOR. I 'll go along with you.

VARRO. Sir Launcelot,

If e'er my arm can do you service, saving
My loyalty to Cæsar . . . count on me.

LAUNCELOT. I do believe you. I do know your
worth.

VARRO. I thank you all. Farewell. Sir Lionel,
I owe you some five hundred sesterces.

Will you be patient till I send them to you,
Or will you take the mare again in payment?

LIONEL. No, keep the brute, that you may not for-
get us;

And I 'll collect the sesterces in Rome.

VARRO. It will be long before your armies sit
Beneath the walls of Rome. But thanks again.

I shall not soon forget you. By the gods,
Were Rome and Britain not at war, I 'd hold

No honor half so dear as to be one

Of your great fellowship — this same Round Table

You tell me of. By Hercules, you are men.

Farewell! [*Exeunt* VARRO, LIONEL, and ECTOR.]

BORS. A valiant pagan, with a touch
Of the old Roman virtue in him yet.

I hold him nearer heaven, with his plain honesty,
Than all the Christian Romans I have seen.

DINADAN. Pagan or Christian, hang 'em all, I say.
I would not treat a pig as they did me.

BORS. There still are not a few among the Romans
Who, like our Varro, hold to the antique gods,
But they resemble him in nothing else.
The rest are Christians more by politics
Than faith and living; and, for the most part now,
To be a Roman is to be made up
Of falsehood, idleness and incontinence.

DINADAN. Treachery and lechery stirred about to-
gether
Like a bad pudding.

Enter GALAHAULT.

GALAHAULT. What, Sir Dinadan!

DINADAN. At your commands, Sir Galahault, I pray
you,

Assign me a post of danger in the rear.
I have a great desire to lead an attack
On the commissariat.

GALAHAULT. Why, so you shall.
For that you 're captain.

BORS. We 'll take leave of you.
We were just going to my tent.

GALAHAULT. I take it
Sir Dinadan needs rest. I 'll not detain you.

BORS. The generals would confer together. Come.

[Exeunt BORS and DINADAN.]

GALAHAULT. It nears the hour the King appointed
us

To hold our council. Shall we go together?

LAUNCELOT. The daily torture! . . .

To hear his voice! To look into his eyes . . .

His honest, outward eyes . . . and read the love there
I have betrayed! . . . Oh, Galahault, you know,

You know, you know; and you must hear me speak —
Or I must find a desert and rip out

My passion to the winds.

GALAHAULT. Had I been silent,
Love would have found a way. I did not count.
And yet so little as I counted, Launcelot,
I reckon it as one of my good deeds.

LAUNCELOT. I will not yield her. No, by heaven,
she's mine,

And by a higher title than the King's.
I cannot yield her; she's not mine to yield.
Love is not goods or gold to be passed on
From hand to hand; it is like life itself,
One with its owner, — pluck it out to give
Another and by that act it is destroyed
And no one richer for your bankruptcy.
Yet if we do no wrong, what's there to hide,
And why must we shift out our lives in lies?
When Arthur puts his arm about my neck
And tells me his imperial dreams, how he
Will shape this world, when he has mastered it,
To something worthier man's immortal soul,

Keeping back nothing of his heart from me —
Oh, Galahault, think how I love the man
And how my heart must choke with its deceit !
It were less miserable to confess to him —
But that were tenfold more disloyalty
To Guenevere than loyalty to him.
Disloyalty ! Oh, God, were I to break
My promise to a slave, I 'd hold myself
A paltry and dishonored thing ; and yet
Whichever way I turn, disloyalty
Yawns like a chasm before me. True is false,
And false is true ; and everything that is,
A mocking contradiction of itself.
I am lost in lies, and must lie on — to him ! . . .
At least I 'll serve him in his dream of empire —
There lies his heart. I have fought in this campaign
Triple myself ! There is no peace for me
But to achieve impossibilities —
Then, all 's too little.

GALAHAULT. Would I had the tithe
Of such a passion ! So are great deeds done.
To have the power to feel go out of you,
That is the worst. I have a workman's pleasure
In my own skill, 't is true ; but all 's for what ?
I have no reason to do anything ;
Would die, but have no reason for that, neither.
You love the Queen, too — What a reason 's there !

LAUNCELOT. Would suffer hell to love her, as indeed

I suffer hell — but love her! I am content.
I have chosen. . . . We must go. I must endure
To look into the eyes of my best friend
And live a lie to him. . . . God, to be in Rome!
To set the Cæsars' crown upon his head!
To make it up to him! . . . Well, come.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III. *The same as Scene I. The spring is more advanced, and the later flowers, lilies especially, have appeared. Some lilies are set in a vase before the shrine of the Virgin. DAGONET is arranging a couch in the garden. Enter DAME BRISEN with her arms full of cushions and coverings.*

DAME BRISEN. I have been midwife these two and forty years, but never yet saw I woman out of her bed, not to say out of doors, the third day after the child was born. It is against all precedent. But she is that stubborn, you might as well argue with Tintagel.

DAGONET. Fast asleep. How antique he looks for only two days old!

DAME BRISEN. Ay, this is the third day. He was born on Easter Sunday, of all days in the world. Have you spoken to the fathers at the Abbey concerning his christening? 'T is for to-day.

DAGONET. Yes, yes. They have gone forth in procession to bless the fields. When they return, at vespers, you're expected. The abbey will furnish

proxies for the sponsors. This seems to be all done by proxy. I wonder the youngster did not appear by attorney himself.

DAME BRISEN. To take the air in the garden! Is she wiser than all the women since Eve? I wash my hands of the consequences. 70

DAGONET. Now, to look at the two of us, who would think that this was a monster of iniquity, not yet washed from his sins, and I one of the saints, clean as a fresh laundered shirt, absolved o' Saturday, communicated o' Sunday, and not having had a chance to commit any sins since?

DAME BRISEN. There, the couch is ready. Mass, I'll not have my fine frock on in time for the christening. [Going.]

Enter YLEN and GUENEVERE.

GUENEVERE (*comes down from the castle with*
YLEN, and sinks on the couch).

. . . Oh, why should we bring forth
Children in weakness, not in strength? Why not 70
Be free and mighty, bearing mighty men,
Yielding our increase as the teeming Earth
That faints not — nay, rather exults and splurges
In her fecundity?

YLEN. Well, by St. Anne,
Was never woman had less cause than thou
To rail against the curse.

GUENEVERE. I am not bedrid;
But yet I am too trammelled for my will,

Which would be in the clouds with yonder hawk 40
And swoop to its desire.

DAME BRISEN. Madam, what name
Will you have given the child?

GUENEVERE. Bring him to me.

DAME BRISEN. He is asleep; I would not wake
him, madam,
Until it rings for vespers.

GUENEVERE. Let me turn, then,
So I can see him. . . . "Wrapped in swaddling
clothes." . . .

He shall be christened Galahad.

DAME BRISEN. A fair name. 50

YLEN. Why do you choose it?

GUENEVERE. I would have him like
His father, even in name. Did you not know
That Launcelot was first named Galahad?

YLEN. No, sooth.

GUENEVERE. Yes, he was christened so; and after
Confirmed and knighted Launcelot of the Lake.

YLEN. Go, get you ready, Brisen. . . . Galahad!

[Exit DAME BRISEN.]

GUENEVERE. Dagonet, you must post from hence
to-night, —

And be you swifter than the hunted fox! 60
I will not give you letters. Be your memory
My parchment. When you come to Launcelot,
Say I am coming — Were my wish my coach,
I should be there before you. But I fear

I shall not speed it with a courier.
Therefore, I send you first; for every day
That he is ignorant, is a day forgotten.
I would my thoughts were arrows to outspeed
The swallow to him! . . . Tell him, he has a son.
— My lips are jealous of the word. Oh, how 7
Can I let any but myself declare
The wonder to him? . . . Fetch me ink and paper.
I *will* write. You shall bear a letter to him.
DAGONET (*going*). If I had the heels of your will,
it would be a quick journey. [*Sings.*]

For stocks and stones are whirled about
With Earth and never range;
And he who never changed his mind,
Must have no mind to change.
Ri fol de riddle rol. 80

[*Exit.*]

YLEN. Look where the slow procession of the
monks

Crawls through the fields.

GUENEVERE. It lies along the downs,
Like a long line of seaweed on the surge.

YLEN. They are turning homeward.

GUENEVERE. Now I look at them,
I almost fancy I can hear their chanting.

YLEN. That's a sharp ear.

GUENEVERE. Nay, surely I can hear them.

*Re-enter DAGONET, with pens, ink, and paper, which
he arranges by GUENEVERE'S side on a table.*

MONKS (*chanting, far off, very faintly*).

Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper * et in sæcula
sæculorum. Amen.

GUENEVERE. I will not write . . . Tell him . . .
tell him . . . Now what

Can he be told by any messenger?

Be letter perfect and there 's something gone

That was the real message. . . . I will write. [*Writes.*]

MONKS (*without, nearer*).

. . . exitus matutini et vespere delectabis.

Visitasti terram, et inebriasti eam * multiplicasti locuple-
tare eam.

Flumen Dei repletum est aquis, parasti cibum illorum *
quoniam ita est præparatio ejus.

Rivos ejus inebria, multiplica genimina ejus * in stillicidiis
ejus lætabitur germinans.

Benedices coronæ anni benignitatis tuæ * et campi tui
replebuntur ubertate.

Pinguescent speciosa deserti * et exultatione colles accin-
gentur.

Induti sunt arietes ovium, et valles abundabunt frumento *
clamabunt, etenim hymnum dicent.

Gloria Patri, et Filio * et Spiritui Sancto ;

Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper * et in sæcula
sæculorum. Amen.

[*With the Gloria the procession of monks begins to
come in sight. First, one with a banner bear-
ing the device of a lion ; next, one with a banner
bearing the device of a dragon ; then follow the
lay brothers, in the brown habits of the order ;
then the priests, who wear surplices over their*

cowls; lastly, the abbot, in cope and mitre, preceded by an acolyte carrying a cross. As the first monk, with the banner of the lion, passes, GUENEVERE, having written her letter and sealed it, turns to DAGONET, who is looking at the monks. YLEN sits with GUENEVERE on the couch, and the three watch the procession silently, until it has passed.]

Domini est terra, et plenitudo ejus * orbis terrarum, et universi qui habitant in eo. 116

Quia ipse super maria fundavit eum * et super flumina præparavit eum.

Quis ascendet in montem Domini * aut quis stabit in loco sancto ejus?

Innocens manibus, et mundo corde * qui non accepit in
[The procession passes out of sight.]

vano animam suam, nec juravit in dolo proximo suo.

Hic accipiet benedictionem a Domino . . .

GUENEVERE. Here is the letter. Guard it with thy life.

DAGONET (*Taking letter*). Better yet, with my wits, and with my heels. I will go in and furnish myself for the journey. Fare you well, madam. Fare you well, my liege. Now to see the world. [Exit.] 120

Enter DAME BRISEN, hurriedly.

DAME BRISEN. It is nigh on the hour. I shall be late. The fathers are already — . . . [*She is about to take up the child in her arms, and suddenly breaks off speaking. The others, startled, look up, and, follow-*

ing her gaze, perceive MERLIN standing in the gate. GUENEVERE rises, but YLEN remains seated on the couch.]

MONKS (*without, in the distance*).

Quis est iste Rex gloriæ? * Dominus virtutum ipse est Rex gloriæ.

Enter MERLIN.

YLEN. You are welcome, Merlin. That I do not rise, My sickness must excuse. Will you go in? Or shall our Brisen bring us cakes and wine Here in the garden?

MERLIN. Madam, bravely played. But you, O Queen, why do you rise and stand Alert, with quivering nostril? Sit you down, And have no fear of me.

GUENEVERE. I fear you not.

MERLIN. The labor to play out your comedy Is much ado for nothing. I'll be plain.

(*To YLEN.*) You, who are childless, must not seem to be;

(*To GUENEVERE.*) And you, who are not childless, must be thought so.

And so your riddle is reed. Now drop your masks. Why feign deceit, since I am not deceived?

GUENEVERE. Nay, then, you know. (*Sinking on couch.*) God knows I love not masks.

It is a bitter thing to lie — to hide
As if you were ashamed of what you lived!
I tell thee, Merlin, I am proud of it, —

Proud of my love, proud of my lover, proud —
Ay, prouder of my child than of my crown!
I would I could go out into the streets
And show him with a boast. I would the world
Might know how much to envy is my joy!
And I must lie — like some poor penny thief
That thinks to 'scape a flogging; I must lie,
Like a base mind that dares not let its thoughts
Out-doors, lest it be seen how vile they are.
It doth unburden me to speak at last
And not degrade myself. You know the truth.
What will you do? I must know what's to be —
The worst! — or best. . . . And yet I do not know
What I hold worst or best. . . . What will you do?

MERLIN. Nothing.

GUENEVERE. Nothing?

MERLIN. Nothing. I judge you not.
I am very old; men call me very wise;
But neither in the codes the Romans brought us,
Nor in the teaching of the Christian monks,
Nor in the stars, nor in the crucible,
No, nor in those dark elder mysteries
The immemorial Druidic years
Down the dim arches of the woods of Time
Have whispered to each other, in the aloof
And native shades of Britain, which are now
A vague tradition of the rustling oak;
Not in all these, nor in all-testing Life
That heeds not our conclusions, have I found

That there is any wisdom beyond this,
To keep oneself from judgment. In myself
Are undiscovered countries; how should I
Map out the wildernesses in another?
In those uncharted regions of your soul,
There are events of which you never dreamed
That yet have drawn your whole life after them.
I have to do only with how your deeds
Affect the State. And it imports the State
That what you have concealed should be concealed.
And therefore have I sought you, that it may
The better be concealed and that we cross not
Each other's purposes.

[The bells of the abbey begin to ring in the distance; and they continue ringing until the end of the scene.]

DAME BRISEN. It rings for vespers.
Shall I not hasten, madam?

GUENEVERE. You may go.

MERLIN. Wait. Let me see the child. . . . If I
mistake not,

We two have stood beneath the sacred oak
Together. You were young and very fair . . .

DAME BRISEN. I was that Druid priestess.

MERLIN. And since then
Men say that you have witnessed darker rites.

DAME BRISEN. Men say they know not what.

MERLIN. But you are she,
That Brisen whom I mean.

DAME BRISEN.

I am that Brisen.

MERLIN. The sight is on me. I behold this child
Grown to a man; the armor that he bears
Is silvern pale; he stands among the knights
Like a white birch among grim-visaged pines;
He is like a moon-lit pillar in the night;
And angels float unseen above his head,
Bearing the Holy Graal.

GUENEVERE. The Holy Graal!

MERLIN. Ay, this is he that shall achieve the Graal
Whose birth has been foretold in prophecies
Even since King Evelac's time. This is the man
Of whom the seers have spoken, saying: He
Shall be a knight without a peer, stainless,
A virgin, set apart unto the Lord.
His arm shall be like David's, and his sword
Like Michael's when he leads the seraphim.
None shall withstand him; the immaterial Fiend
Dare not affront the flame along his blade.
So he shall pass across the twilight world
Like a white meteor and disappear
None knoweth how nor whither.

GUENEVERE.

Strange and holy

I know he is. In the still hours I have heard
The footfalls of celestial visitants.
Strange spells have come upon me. And I
Who am not wont to pray, have felt my soul
Become a phraseless prayer and lie, like night,
Bare to the stars. . . . God, is it no sacrifice

I lay upon thy dark and shadowy altar?
Never to call him son, never to feel
His little arms about my neck, never
To hear his wakening spirit turn to mine
Its dear unfolding loves . . . and now, even now
To leave him! . . . I shall watch him from afar;
His glory will be trumpets in my heart;
But the great gulfs of silence are between us.
You dark remorseless creditors that exact
Our debts with usury, is it not enough? . . .

CURTAIN.

*[The bells continue to ring a few moments after
the curtain falls.]*

ACT II.

SCENE. *The top of a hill, north of Rome and west of the Tiber. Over the brink of the hill, a view of the valley of the Tiber with Rome in the distance.*

KING ARTHUR, LAUNCELOT, LIONEL, ECTOR, and DINADAN, *on horseback, attended by two Squires.*

KING ARTHUR and LAUNCELOT, *a little apart from the others, converse, looking off at the city.*

ARTHUR. So order it.

LAUNCELOT. Lionel, get you back

To the main army. Order Galahault

To move his forces southward and encamp

Before Janiculum. His function there

Is by activity, assault, bravado,

To keep the enemy's eyes on him — and therefore

Away from us. The main part of the forces

Do you yourself bring forward; pitch their tents

Here to the west, so ordered that they seem

Following on Galahault's trail. You, Ector, haste

To join the advance, which must be on our heels,

And lead them hither. We shall occupy

This hill and the approach. The King and I

Will pitch our tents here on the summit. Dinadan,
You will remain; we may have need of you.

[*Exeunt* LIONEL and ECTOR. LAUNCELOT and
DINADAN *dismount and their horses are led off
by a Squire. The other Squire approaches
ARTHUR, still looking at the city, and after he
too has dismounted, leads his horse away after
the others.*]

ARTHUR. If Galahault can hold the foe in action
Before Janiculum, it will be easy
To cross our forces to the eastern bank
Almost without resistance. In great part,
Their legions have already fallen back.

LAUNCELOT. But yet they still are in great numbers
there

Between the Tiber and the Flaminian Gate.

DINADAN. That's the first Roman standard I have
seen

In Italy. Our progress from the Rhone
Has been a Maying rather than a war.

ARTHUR. 'T was no such holidaying at the start.
You were in Britain at the worst. The war
Was six months old before you reached the camp.

DINADAN. Not by my fault, my lord.

ARTHUR. I said not so.

But thus it happened that you have not seen
How these same Romans fight. Six months they held us
North of the Loire. But our last victories
(Wherein you played your part, Sir Dinadan),

Were like a flood, bursting the sturdy dam
That had so long resisted. Their great army
Crumbled to pieces like a fog. Perforce,
They must fall back on Rome, renew themselves,
And leave our march unhindered.

DINADAN. I am glad
You sent for me no sooner. I confess
This is the kind of war that pleases me.

ARTHUR. Oh, no more ease; there are the walls of
Rome.
It will be bloody work before we take them.
You shall be in the front.

DINADAN. The devil I will! . . .
Why must you send for me and not for Tristram
To bring your reinforcements? I was content
At Camelot . . . and no great gain, besides;
While Tristram! . . . after Launcelot the best
Among your knights! . . .

ARTHUR. Therefore he is in Britain.
Were all my bravest here, it would invite
Revolt among the unreconciled at home.
Especially I trust not Mark of Cornwall.

DINADAN. Lucky Tristram! Would I might change
lots with him . . .
Yseult and all!

ARTHUR. What's Yseult?

DINADAN. Not heard yet
Of Yseult, Irish Yseult, Yseult the Fair,
And what men say of Tristram and of her?

ARTHUR. I have heard the King of Ireland has a
daughter,
Whose beauty some have praised with Guenevere's;
But not a word of Tristram.

DINADAN (*to LAUNCELOT*). My lord the King
Takes little heed of such light things as these;
But you have heard the tale.

LAUNCELOT. I have heard nothing.

DINADAN. Why, you poor exiles! All Britain
whispers of it,
And Ireland too. It is the latest secret
That everybody keeps. Has not the rumor
Yet reached the camp? It fell upon this wise
— Or so the story goes — King Mark of Cornwall,
Although Sir Tristram is his sister's son,
Hates him that, having done you homage, sire,
And sworn to keep the faith of the Round Table,
He would not join him in his late revolt.
Casting about what way to do him ill
And 'scape your wrath, no sooner were you gone,
Than Mark sends Tristram into Ireland (where
The very hounds were hungry for revenge
On him that slew their masters) to demand
In Mark's behalf the Princess Yseult's hand.

ARTHUR. The treacherous coward!

DINADAN. The plot failed; for Tristram
Came in the nick of time to save the king
From something, — I forget just what it was —
But anyhow, all enmity wiped out,

The Irish welcomed Tristram like a brother,
Feasted him like a prince and sent him back
To Cornwall rich with gifts; and Yseult with him,
To be the Queen of Cornwall and Mark's wife.

ARTHUR. Too vile a traitor to be so rewarded!

DINADAN. Well, as for that . . . wait till you hear
the end. . . .

Perhaps he was rewarded. This is what
They say; that the Queen Mother brewed a drink
Of such enchantment that whoever drank it
Should from that moment sink so deep in love
Drowning is nothing to it. This she did
That Yseult and King Mark might drink together
And no division ever sunder them;
Then gave the cup to Yseult's handmaiden
Brangwain, to give them on their wedding night.
But Yseult knew not of it; so it came
That as they sailed toward Cornwall, on a day,
Tristram being hot and thirsty, Yseult sought
A draught for him and found Brangwain asleep
And the cup by her; and they two drank thereof
And straightway loved each other.

ARTHUR. Think you it true?

DINADAN. Why, for the potion, be that as it may.
I hold it likely Tristram drank some wine,
And not unlikely that he kissed the lady;
And all, perhaps, without the devil's help.

ARTHUR. Fair fall their loves; he is a worthy
knight.

LAUNCELOT (*aside*). What, Arthur !

DINADAN. On the wedding night, they say,
Yseult would have no lights, for modesty ;
And in the dark Brangwain went to King Mark,
And Yseult — did not miss him.

LAUNCELOT. Oh, oh, oh !

ARTHUR (*leaving DINADAN and going over to*
LAUNCELOT).

Launcelot . . . Now fie, fie ! Be merry, man.
The old rogue is well served. . . . It troubles me
That you have grown so moody and apart
Of late. That ribald slander of Morgause
Against you and the Queen has poisoned all
The joy of life in you. Since then you are changed ;
You smile not ; and especially I note
That all light words of gallantry offend you.
Tut, let them flinch that have uneasy souls.

LAUNCELOT. *They* have grown senseless of the sting
with use.

ARTHUR. Were every flippant speech considered
deeply,
Life would become unintermitting thorns. . . .
Now as you love me !

LAUNCELOT. As I love you, Arthur, —

DINADAN. My liege ! Launcelot ! Quick, to horse !
Look yonder !

The Romans !

ARTHUR. Where ? Away ; we shall be taken.

LAUNCELOT. Why is not Ector here ?

ARTHUR.

Away!

DINADAN. To horse! [*Exeunt. Gallop without.*]

Enter DAGONET, by another path.

DAGONET. This is the place, but where are the knights? I was told when I came up with the army, that I should find Sir Launcelot on the crest of this hill. Well, here is the crest, and that's the nearest to knighthood I can see; the only devices here are those I am left to. I shall never dare be drunk, turn a handspring, woo a lass nor let my tongue wag o' Sundays, till I have delivered this letter. I might as well not be a Fool. This is the place, sure; yonder's Rome — the Eternal City. Well, well; now I have seen Rome. I suppose there are a great many about here could say the same thing. . . . Ha! I don't know what a Roman soldier looks like, but I can guess near enough to run. [*Going.*]

Enter Roman Soldiers.

SOLDIERS. A prize! a prize! [*DAGONET is taken.*]

Enter VARRO, LINUS, and more Soldiers.

VARRO (*speaking off*). Hold all the passes, and send forward scouts

To see how near the enemy approaches. . . .

(*To LINUS.*) These orders are to hold this place until More troops are sent to join us. It would seem

As if the Emperor had changed his plan

And meant to cross the Tiber. . . . What is this?

LINUS. A parrot, by his plumage.

VARRO.

On my word,

This is the queerest capture ever I saw.

What are you, fellow?

DAGONET. Earth, air, water, and fire — according to the opinion of the most learned philosophers.

VARRO. What?

DAGONET. Man, sir, is thus compounded. — Earth and water is mud; mud and fire is pottery; and what are we all but jugs, with a breath of life added?

VARRO. What are you babbling? Come, sirrah, a plain answer; who are you?

DAGONET. One of the children of the wind. Our father blows whither he listeth, and we follow the trail of his patrins. But indeed, sir, to speak plainly, I am a juggler.

VARRO. Search him.

[*Certain soldiers, under the supervision of LINUS, search DAGONET. VARRO goes about among the soldiers, giving directions. They begin to busy themselves with the routine of camp life; some pitching tents, some building a fire, etc. Exeunt some.*]

LINUS. There is nothing suspicious about him, captain.

VARRO. His answers are. They are overmuch craft or overmuch folly.

LINUS. Tut, a poor innocent! His wits are not right. There is no harm in him.

VARRO. Perhaps not. Sirrah, you are a juggler, say you? In anything but words?

DAGONET. Why, that were the greatest jugglery of all; for the other but dazzles the eye, but this bewilders the mind itself. But in sooth I can twirl a plate upon occasion.

VARRO. If he be a juggler, he cannot be entirely fool. . . . A little of your mystery.

DAGONET. Stand back, all. Make a ring.

SOLDIERS. A juggler! A juggler!

DAGONET. Give me your purse. (*VARRO hands his purse to DAGONET, who puts it in his pocket.*) Thank you. (*Suppressed laughter among the soldiers.*)

VARRO. Call you that juggling?

DAGONET. Oh, sir, we that are gentlemen of the road must live as we may. Your bird of passage eats in all orchards. (*Takes balls from his wallet and juggles with them. The soldiers applaud.*) Pooh! Nothing . . . nothing! All in the air . . . Your knives, now . . . Oh, they are not purses. (*Juggles with knives. Applause, interrupted by a stir at the back.*)

VOICES. The Emperor! The Emperor!

Enter LUCIUS and PUBLIUS.

VARRO. Cæsar!

[*DAGONET sees PUBLIUS with a start of recognition, and tries to get out of sight. PUBLIUS catches his eye and looks at him markedly. While this is taking place—*]

LUCIUS. Your legion lies as I would have it. But have a care, — this post imports me much;

Let not your merriment, which I do not censure,
Forget your soldiership. The reinforcements
Will be sent on at dusk.

DAGONET. Lord Publius!

Whew! I must have my wits about me now.

PUBLIUS. Know you who yonder motley fellow is?

VARRO. A juggler and a common vagabond
By his account.

PUBLIUS. How came he in the camp?

VARRO. He is a prisoner . . . an alien,
Perhaps a Briton — it seemed wisest. . . .

PUBLIUS. Cæsar,
When I was your ambassador in Britain,
That fellow there, the Queen's Fool, Dagonet,
Spoiled more than one well-thought device of mine.
I do assure you, there is danger in him.
He is alert, agile of wit and limb,
Ready in unforeseen emergency,
Well fitted for a spy. . . . Has he been searched?

VARRO. But now.

LINUS. Thoroughly, my lord.

LUCIUS. Is this the man
Who so engaged you as we came this way?

LINUS. 'T was he, my lord.

LUCIUS (*throwing aside his cloak*). Bid him come
hither.

PUBLIUS. Cæsar,
'T is like the searching was perfunctory;
There may be nothing; still — he's crafty —

LUCIUS.

Fool,

Here is Lord Publius, a Senator,
And sometime our ambassador in Britain,
Who says you are the Queen's Fool, and no juggler.

DAGONET. Nay, that follows not; for he must have more dexterity than a juggler, who can play the fool for a woman and keep his place. But to tell the truth, I am but a gentleman juggler, a dilettante; I do it for the love of art and not professionally. That is to say, in a sort, I am but a juggler as one were to say of Cæsar, he is a lute player.

LUCIUS. Thou saucy Fool, the craftiest musicians In Rome have praised my skill.

DAGONET. I warrant they have; they had little craft else. Well, I also am extolled; as you are excellent among lute players, so am I in this whim of mine. An it were not for our stations, they of the crafts should find us troublesome rivals.

LUCIUS. Lord Publius says you should be searched again.

DAGONET. I hide nothing but my heart. Let it be by women this time. And your soldiers are something rougher than necessary. I am limber enough in the joints, but a flail would protest to be twisted so.

LUCIUS. Your Fool is an odd rogue; I like him, Publius.

Come let us see some of this boasted sleight.

DAGONET. If I slip, you shall blame your thirsty-throated lubbers here, that took me for a pump and

were nigh to put my shoulder out of joint. Ave,
Cæsar, saltaturi salutamus.

[Turns a handspring; then, with articles borrowed from the soldiery, performs several feats of legerdemain. Suddenly he begins to turn wheels on his hands, charging directly on the soldiers, who make way for him laughing, scattering from before the fire, by which DAGONET is stopped. Alighting on his feet, he throws his cap in the air, catches it on the end of his bauble, and twirls it, throwing it up again and again until at last he misses it and it falls into the fire. He springs forward as if to snatch it out, starts back as if he had burned his fingers, makes a wry face, and then with a whoop turns a somersault backwards in the air. But PUBLIUS, who has been watching him closely, runs to the fire, and plucking the cap from the flames, tears open the lining and holds up the letter that was hidden there. DAGONET crest-fallen.]

PUBLIUS. Said I not so? (*Opens the letter.*)

There 's that within this letter
That is for Cæsar's ear alone.

LUCIUS.

Withdraw.

[*Exeunt VARRO, LINUS and Soldiers.*]

PUBLIUS. Now this could not be better had we been
In Fortune's secrets. You remember, Cæsar,
When I came back to Rome from Arthur's court,

I told you of the Queen and Launcelot,
The love between them, and the dull King's blindness.
Here is the proof . . . a letter of the Queen —
To Launcelot — this Fool the messenger. . . .
Listen. (*Reads.*)

I have borne you a son. . . .

Were I to tell you what wondrous intimations I have
had concerning him, it would profit nothing ; for the best
is not to be fixed in words, nor even in thought. . . .

He is named Galahad, and it is given out that he is the
child of Ylen, the daughter of King Pelles. . . .

I can no longer endure it to be apart from you. There-
fore I have made an excuse of the King's victories and the
lessening war, to set out to join the armies. It is known
here that I start within the week ; and I shall have crossed
the sea into France before Dagonet gives this into your
hands.

Till then, when I can say what I know not how I should
write, —

GUENEVERE.

[*About this time, DAGONET, who has been sitting
apart, in great dejection, lifts up his head as if
an idea had come to him, looks about the scene,
and then begins to watch the others attentively.*]

LUCIUS. Coming to join their armies ! These
barbarians —

They take their women everywhere ! . . . Could we
But capture her ! If but the half be true
These bragging Britons paragon her with,
She is one of those rare things that must be looked
on ;

If looked on, coveted; if coveted --
I am still Cæsar. I have heard her so
Recounted that to her Faustina were
Indifferent fair; Hero but so so; and
Great Cleopatra left without a lure.
Helen herself and all Praxiteles
Could dream of Aphrodite were but hints
And guesses of her. If there be one such
And that one not be mine, why then indeed
The empire is o'erthrown and to be Cæsar
No longer master.

PUBLIUS. Rome is not yet fallen;
But that it may not is our first concern.
See you not how this letter may be used
To split the enemy into factions?

LUCIUS. Well;
You will be practical.

PUBLIUS. If Arthur see
This letter —

LUCIUS. There were some revenge in that.
Ho, ho! ho, ho! what quintessential torment
To see the picture of their stolen hours
Start up before his fancy!

PUBLIUS. Here's the fact;
A bat could not be blind to 't. It must make
Irreparable feud between the King
And Launcelot; and half of Arthur's knights,
The fairer half, will hold with Launcelot.
The fate of Rome may hang upon this scroll.

[*A silence for some moments, during which LUCIUS paces up and down in thought. DAGONET watches him studiously from the back, and essays quietly to counterfeit his motions. When LUCIUS pauses and, facing Publius, is about to speak, DAGONET softly catches up the imperial cloak from where it has fallen, wraps it about him, and exit boldly, imitating the gait and bearing of the Emperor.*]

LUCIUS. No, Arthur will not cut off his right hand

While it still wields the sword for him ; he will not
Break up his army in opposing camps
And fall to internecine bickerings,
Whate'er the cause, here, in an alien country,
And with the prize o' the world in controversy.
It is not generalship ; and I have had reason
To know how good a general he is.

PUBLIUS. He is too foolish honest for such policy.

LUCIUS. He does not plan his campaigns like a fool.

I think he could make shift to endure this knowledge
Until the issue of the war is tried.

Then — doubtless . . . but what good were that to us ?

No . . . listen . . . this is rather what to do ;

Let Launcelot, not Arthur, know the letter

Is in our hands. Then offer him the choice, —

To leave their armies and transfer his power

To ours, in which event (which would ensure

VARRO. The Emperor here? One of the sentries
said

He had passed by.

LUCIUS. My cloak.

PUBLIUS. Your cloak, Most Mighty?
Stolen? He has escaped. After him! Quick,
Send out —

VOICES (*without*). To arms! to arms! to arms!

[*The sky begins to redden with the sunset.*]

Enter LINUS, hurriedly.

LINUS.

Captain!

The enemy are almost at our lines;
The scouts report them in great numbers on
The Cassian Way. I have called the men to arms.

VARRO. Upon us? Cæsar, —

LUCIUS. Where are they that saw them?
Bring me to them. [*Exeunt all but PUBLIUS.*]

VOICES (*without*). Fall in! fall in! fall in!

[*Noises of preparation without; then silence.*]

Enter a Messenger.

MESSENGER. Where is the Emperor?

PUBLIUS. Whence come you?

MESSENGER. From Rome.

Couriers from Cinna's Hill bring word the foe
Are moving toward Janiculum. The cohorts
Would know if they are still to advance this way.

[*Cries without, "Pendragon! Pendragon!"*]

Alarums. Noise of fighting.]

Enter VARRO.

VARRO. Where 's Cæsar? They outnumber us
ten to one.

We cannot hold them long. The Emperor
Must be in safety ere it is too late.
Flee he and you at once! I'll make a stand
If possible. If reinforcements come,
All's not lost yet.

[Exit. Noises of combat.]

Enter LUCIUS.

PUBLIUS. The place cannot be held.
Away, my lord!

LUCIUS. Peace! . . . Ho! a courier!

MESSENGER. Most Mighty!

PUBLIUS. One that comes in haste
from Rome.

LUCIUS. Then get you back to Rome and bid the
cohorts .

Without the Flaminian Gate hither at once . . .

Go! *[Exit Messenger.]*

PUBLIUS. Flee, save yourself, Cæsar —

LUCIUS. Peace, I say!

[Cries without, "A Launcelot! a Launcelot!"]

Enter the Romans, fleeing, in great disorder.

Why do you run, you curs? Stand! Turn! Back,
slaves!

You scum of Rome! you pigs! you —

SOLDIERS (*dispersedly*) Save yourselves! . . .

Flee! . . . Out o' the way there! . . . Devil take
you! . . . Flee!

[LUCIUS and PUBLIUS are swept away
by the rush of the fugitives.]

*Enter Britons, led by ECTOR. Then LAUNCELOT,
BORS, and DINADAN.*

ECTOR. Pendragon! On! Pendragon!

LAUNCELOT. On! Pursue them

As far 's the bridge.

[*Exeunt ECTOR and Britons.*]

BORS. They have but taken the pains
To pitch our tents and build our fire for us.

DINADAN. And breathe us just sufficiently to taste
The supper we shall cook on 't with a relish.

LAUNCELOT. Bors, see you to the quartering of the
troops

As they come up. Dinadan, follow Ector,
And, if he need more men, supply them to him.

[*Exeunt BORS and DINADAN.*]

Enter DAGONET. It begins to be twilight.

DAGONET. My lord!

LAUNCELOT. Dagonet! . . . What has happened? . . .

DAGONET. Kick me for a clod, a dolt, a duffer, a
doodle! a lubberly, inept, clumsy, bungling dizzard
and hobbledehoy! I am not capable of . . .

LAUNCELOT. Plague on your prating! Set my
mind at rest.

What tidings of the Queen?

DAGONET. There 's nought ill there. The Queen is well, and the child she has borne —

LAUNCELOT. The child !

DAGONET. Ay, sir, a boy—a real boy, with movable eyes. The Princess Ylen has understudied for the mother and will assume the part hereafter.

LAUNCELOT. My son !

DAGONET. The women feign to find a marvellous resemblance to you in him ; but for my part—a man's eyes have no skill in these mysteries — but I would have said your lordship had a more plentiful provision of nose and was — . . .

LAUNCELOT. Peace, Dagonet.

DAGONET. Nay, you have not heard all yet. The Queen is coming.

LAUNCELOT. Coming? Hither?

DAGONET. With all the speed she is able. I was to go before her and make her paths straight ; but I got lost in the wilderness.

LAUNCELOT. Coming? But all you say is like a song ;

You made me think you came with evil news.

DAGONET. One word more, and my singing is all unmusicked — off the pitch, out o' the key ; and you would liefer hear a charivari of tin pans and penny trumpets. What I have told you, you should have read, in the Queen's own hand, in a letter I was to deliver you. This morning, when I overtook the armies, Sir Bors sent me forward to this hill, saying

I should find you here ; where instead I found the enemy, was captured, searched, and the letter taken from me.

LAUNCELOT. A letter? Know you what was writ in it?

DAGONET. Not the phrase; but I know that it spoke of her coming and of the child.

LAUNCELOT. The child . . . Oh, my God!

DAGONET. If you would run your sword through me, I should not much care; and if you would kick me, it would be a real kindness.

LAUNCELOT. We must get back the letter.

Enter ECTOR, BORS, and DINADAN. Afterwards, certain Soldiers with a haunch on a spit.

Here's Dagonet
Come to help us take Rome — No, do not laugh;
This is quite serious . . . and what he undertakes,
More perilous than ought we soldiers do. . . .
(*To Soldiers.*) Go, use some other fire. We'd be
alone here.

[*Exeunt Soldiers.*]

DINADAN. Well, Dagonet, what are you going to do?

Set Rome on fire . . . or the Tiber, which?

LAUNCELOT. Mask himself as a slave and enter Rome.

The King is lucky to have such a spy.

Dinadan, take him with you to your tent,

And see how well you can disfigure him.

DINADAN. Disfeature him? I'll so disfeature him
His bath-tub would n't know him.

DAGONET. Come along, then. You may shave me
as bald as a Greek monk. You may dye me black,
yellow, or striped. You may make anything of me,
from Epictetus to a blackamoor. Only I bar mutes
and eunuchs.

DINADAN. A few slashes, with peppers in them . . .

DAGONET. Hold! . . . Well, for the sake of the
cause. A beggar will ulcerate himself for a penny,
and my reward is glory.

DINADAN. Then you will go to glory pickled.

DAGONET. Why, then my glory will keep.

DINADAN. Come on, Fool.

DAGONET. After you, sir.

[*Exeunt* DINADAN and DAGONET.]

LAUNCELOT. Follow them, Ector, lest their frolic
wits

Outrun the purpose with mere travesty. . . .

[*Exit* ECTOR.]

Where is the King?

BORS.

Seeing the enemy

In no great force, and a mere skirmish forward

Wherein we must be victors, he turned back

To rejoin Lionel, and himself o'erlook

The dispositions made of the main forces.

SOLDIERS (*without, singing*).

Then out, boys, and forage,

For a man can't fight on porridge

And swagger with a soldierly effrontery.
There's no butcher to be paid,
And no game laws to evade
In the heart of the enemy's country.

Hi! hi! hi!

BORS. I am not so wakeful as those fellows yonder;
I'll have a bite of supper and to bed.

LAUNCELOT. Good night, then, Bors.

BORS. Good night. [*Exit BORS.*

LAUNCELOT. Have all these men
No cankers in their hearts? Is it the great
Alone that suffer, that these simple folk
Are so light-hearted?

A SOLDIER (*without, singing*).

There's a lass of Camelot
Winsome as the wind,
Wilful as the wind!
Would I were in Camelot!
Fond as the doe,
Frolic as the snow —
Lucky is the lover's lot
Wins the lass of Camelot.

There's a lass of Camelot
Sweet as the hills,
As the windy hills!
Would I were in Camelot! . . .

LAUNCELOT. Yet to have a son!
That's worth an agony. . . . Born of such a mother! —
How his achievements will keep life a joy!
The day he puts his armor on, unblazoned,

And goes to his first victory, what pride
To see his helmet glittering in the sun !
Such pride in one's own deeds would spoil the deed ;
A son's accomplishment is ours for triumph,
Not ours for selfward shame. To have a son !
Now could I almost join the soldiers there
And sing for mere o'erflowing.

SOLDIERS (*without, singing*).

On with the King ! On with the King !
Sword, flash, and battle-axe, swing !
Shout, " For the King ! "
Cheer, " For the King ! "
Strike — for the King !

LAUNCELOT.

We are in the palm

Of Fate. The unremitting drift of things
Bears us we know not whither — to be engulfed,
Or by a random whim of chance swept on
To some haphazard safety . . . all to nothing !
There seems not so much hope as would suffice
To make a weary swimmer struggle on,
No sail nor shore in sight. . . . Yet I am calm, . . .
Calm as the night . . . as pure of doubt or dread
As if the sky had told me *All is well*.
It is strange. . . . And she is coming ! Fill her sails
With nimble wafture, wind — but gently, too,
As now you touch my forehead. Glide away
Beneath her wheels like running water, roads,
And speed her hither in a dream. . . . Coming ! . . .
What a still joy is in the air to-night !

As if earth hushed her noises that our souls
Might hear each other across the silent leagues. . . .
Have your will, Fate : not on us is its might.

*[Pauses, and stands silently, in the light of the
fire, with his cloak wrapped about him, look-
ing out over the valley.]*

SOLDIERS (*without, singing*).

There 's Meg and there 's Molly
And there 's Susan and there 's Polly ;
And we 'll all be jolly
When we 're home from the wars

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE. *Rome. Evening. Gardens of the Palace of Lucius. At back, a colonnade of the palace, with balcony above. On one side, a place arranged for the performance of an interlude. The palace is brilliantly lighted, and sounds of feasting and revel are heard. VOCONIUS and VOCONIA.*

A VOICE (*without, singing*).

Tell me no grim tales of a surly morrow;
Wreathe me with roses.

VOCONIUS. That is Terentius singing; his cæsuras
Would make Catullus creep. There, look, from here
You can see Cæsar.

VOCONIA. With the purple toga,
And bay-leaves in his hair?

VOCONIUS. Ay. . . . Let me clasp
This buckle for you; there, that's better; now
The flesh just hints it hides there, as you walk . . .
You are perfect in the lines?

VOCONIA. Yes. . . . He is like
The statues of Antinous.

VOCONIUS. That's Metella
That sits by him;—she bores him now. And that's

Her uncle, Publius Metellus, who
Whispers apart with Cæsar ; he and Bursa
Are Cæsar's favorites.

VOCONIA. And you, Voconius?

VOCONIUS. But after them. I hope, my little sister,
To change all that, now you are come to court.

[Attendants pass across the scene, bearing fruits and wines. Laughter within the palace.]

VOCONIA. Oh, how I long for all that life — the
laughter,
The motion, the delight !

VOCONIUS. It is all yours
To-night, Voconia ; only do not play
The frightened fool to Cæsar.

VOCONIA. If I falter
It will be with the shudder of new joy.

VOCONIUS. A coyness, if you will; but not too far.

VOCONIA. No fear, brother. I have dreamed of this time, —

And Lydia, my nurse, has read me tales
Out of your library, and poems, till
I would drink the very wine whose airy vision
I tire to lift in fancy to my lips.

VOCONIUS. Good; I so ordered it. Your education

Has been a care to me. . . . The Emperor
Is in a happy mood. Yesterday Bursa
Defeated Galahault at Janiculum,
And captured him, with many of his men.

The captive general is here, to make
The banquet more triumphant. Now come we,
And on the crest and sprayward of his humor
Light like a sunbeam shattered into mist.
I have just come from Cæsar; he is pleased
Graciously to commend the title of
My interlude, "The Rape of Helen," — he
Is in the vein for 't. Oh, he knows the difference
Between me and Terentius! . . . Let the peplos
Loosen a little and slip down — so — as if
You were unaware. . . . When Helen says, "And
thou,
If I be she of whom the goddess speaks,
Take me," — look not at Paris, look at Cæsar.
I'll yield the rôle to him there . . . and the rest
You may improvise between you. — Withdraw yonder.
I'll back to Cæsar and conduct him hither. [Exit.]

VOCONIA. O dreams and long desires, farewell,
farewell!

How beautiful is Cæsar! [Exit.]

Enter a Monk. Various persons pass across the scene, among them, DAGONET, disguised. The Monk detains him.

DAGONET. Have you brought the manuscripts?

MONK. They are a mirror-snare of Satan. They have filled my ears with a buzzing of fiends. They stir up evil thoughts in the heart and make the abomination of Baal and Ashtoreth to swim between mine eyes and the crucifix. But that our holy father, the

Pope, had commanded me to copy them for you, I had torn them in pieces a dozen times and burned the fragments with fire.

DAGONET. Why, I heard Voconius declaim the verses, and I was not prompted to so much as a wriggle. But I am not a monk. And I am hardened to bad poets.

MONK. May the thoughts they bred in me be forgiven! I did contend stoutly with them.

DAGONET. Tut, man, the Pope will absolve you. You sinned for the glory of God. Give me the manuscripts, and copy this.

MONK. Shall I put my soul in peril again?

DAGONET. Tell me this, — do you not wish for the success of King Arthur?

MONK. Sir, the Pope and all good Christians pray for him daily. He is a righteous man; and he is descended from the holy Empress, Saint Helena, that found the Cross, and from the great Constantine, who saw the glory of it in the heavens. He hath the better title to the empire, and the present government is a revel of Antichrist.

DAGONET. I serve King Arthur. My business here, my true business, is the discovery of certain papers. To make my search the easier, the Pope commended me to Voconius for a scribe; and as everybody knows His Holiness has the best calligraphers in Rome, Voconius was delighted to buy me, and the coffers of the Church were enriched. . . .

Now I learned letters enough of the Glastonbury monks to read what is writ plain, if I be not hurried; but a scribe—! They would take my pothooks for ancient Chaldean. The Pope's reputation would be gone forever; and I should be flogged for a dunce or a cheat, or worse, the plot discovered and — (*making a gesture as of a noose about his neck*) the Lord have mercy on my soul!

MONK. Give me the new manuscript. I will speak to the prior.

DAGONET. Do so; and to the Pope himself, too.
. . . Now, be off; they are coming.

MONK. Dominus vobiscum. [Exit.]

DAGONET (*looking at the copies brought by the Monk*). Marvellously chirographied! Dagonet, Dagonet, who would have thought thou hadst this art in thee! Who knows what he can do till he tries?

Enter Slaves, with torches; then LUCIUS, VOCONIUS, METELLA, PUBLIUS, GALAHAULT, *Senators, Knights, Courtiers, Ladies, Attendants, etc.*

PUBLIUS (*To Galahault*). Though Bursa get the glory of your capture,
I cannot be persuaded but that you
Were your own conqueror. When a veteran
Dares a defeat like a foolhardy boy,
He means to be defeated, — he's a reason . . .

LUCIUS (*to Voconius*). Well, more of this again.

I do not question,

Mind you, but art may wring a compelled beauty
Out of the very meanness of its means.

VOCONIUS. I grant my judgment weaker, but me-
seems
Rhyme is no meanness but a charm the more
The ancients knew not of.

LUCIUS. The charm's too simple,
Too obvious; but our decadent art
Must have its cymbals. Come, your interlude . . .
You present Paris . . . ?

VOCONIUS. And my sister, Helen;
I crave your gentle judgment for us both. [*Exit.*]

LUCIUS. I did not know Voconius had a sister.

METELLA. A school-girl, — come to court for the
first time

To-night, — a nun-bred miss. A proper Helen!
Helen the vestal! Helen the ingénue!

LUCIUS. Sir Galahault, pray you, be not withdrawn
So far from us; a word with you. [*They talk apart.*]

METELLA (*to Publius*). Where's Bursa?

PUBLIUS. He left the palace not an hour ago.
Some news that came by sudden courier
Put him clean from the matter here in hand.

METELLA. What can it be, I wonder?

PUBLIUS. I suspect,
Some news of Guenevere's itinerary.
I cannot think what else should stir him so;
He knows her capture is a thing that Cæsar
Makes much of.

METELLA. Is it so?

LUCIUS. — a merry . . . Publius!

[LUCIUS and PUBLIUS converse.]

METELLA. Sir Galahault, in your far Britain what
Are the chief sights you boast of?

GALAHAULT. Truly, madam,
I think the fairest sight that Britain boasts
Is camped before your walls.

METELLA. Nay, but I meant . . .
[*They go on conversing.*]

LUCIUS. It is not that. We have known for several
days
The route she follows. If she change it not,
Our ambuscade is sure. Perhaps she — Well,
We 'll know anon. Here comes our interlude.

Enter VOCONIUS as PARIS.

PARIS. Sea-born and subtle and fair and mighty as the
sea,
Changing and changeless Aphrodite, unto thee
I lift my voice in praise and my palms in thanksgiving;
Who hast brought me, witless of the port I sailed for, giving
The helm to Chance and thee, hither to the Argive shore
In my black ships, and folding me about with more
Than earthly mist hast led my steps, divinely dazed,
Hither; and all the blind night from my soul is rased.
For surely now I am aware that I shall see
Her whom thy divine kiss-wise lips have promised me,
The fairest among women. . . . Are they nymphs that
yonder
Rise from the roseate waters like the dreams that wander
About the tranced woods of young vision? Lo, they stand

Naked and naiad-haired upon the river strand
 And the air flushes with their bodies and the morning.
 I tremble, and my heart swells with a divine warning;
 No water-spirits these, — human and kindred-sweet,
 For now they gather up strewn garments at their feet,
 Such as the Spartan women wear; and now they cover
 The beauty that has had the winds and waves for lover.
 One only, lordlier, lovelier than the others, still
 Stands rapturous of the air. They wait upon her will
 As on a queen's. Their beauty in her beauty merges
 As the dim stars at dawn founder in luminous surges.
 I cannot see her face, but all love's splendor slips
 Down shoulders like the moon and the music of her hips.
 Now at a sign they bring her saffron' peplos to her;
 And now . . . she turns — Cypris! if it be not to woo her,
 Her, daughter of desire and mystery and joy,
 Why hast thou led me hither from the towers of Troy
 Across the winy sea? Surely none other fairer
 Than she in all the round world might the furthest farer
 Of all earth's wanderers find; but I, beholding her,
 Praise thee, O Queen of Love, and am thy worshipper. . . .

LUCIUS. Well done, Voconius!

ALL. Bravo! Well done, Voconius!

LUCIUS. What crafty Alexandrines! Poet first, —
 But only less the actor.

ALL. Bravo, bravo!

Enter Chorus of Spartan Damsels, and VOCONIA,
as HELEN.

CHORUS. Sparta, thy daughters, [str.
 Fearless and free, —
 Behold us, how we laugh at the cold hill-waters,
 Blush not for bodies brown with the sun,

Tough with the wind and rain !
The young men fear us in the footrace ; we
Are not useless in casting the javelin. Swift and sane,
(Out of air, life and strife beauty born !)
The gods have made us goodly to look upon
And no man does us scorn.

What was there wanting, [ant.
Sparta, to thee ?
The touch of sky that beggars the brown earth's vaunting,
Beauty that pierces men like a spear,
Beauty divinely bright,
Not of the earth, that makes men mad to see ;
Until Helen was given thee for queen and the wonder-light
Drenched the dales, flushed the peaks as with wine, —
Beauty that makes the whole world tremble and veer
And reel into the divine.

Daughter of Leda, Queen ! [ep.
What god has given thee
The splendor and the sheen
Of the dawns that live in thee ?
Our praise is alien, unimpassioned, far,
To do thee honor, star
Of the flushed east !
Sparta is not aflame
Enough to be thy priest.
Beauty is with child with Love,
And until Love be born
There is no name
By which her rite is said.
Come, then, and above
Our altars from
Lighten with morn,
Love !

He comes, O Helen ; not forever
Shalt thou be mocked with undivine endeavor.
Lift up thy head,
Daughter of Leda !

[*Applause.*]

LUCIUS. A fairer Helen never played the part.
Is she not exquisite, Sir Galahault ?

GALAHAUT. As lyric as a throstle's song, my lord.

METELLA. Too slight for Helen — pretty, but girlish.

LUCIUS. Peace !

Now Paris speaks.

PARIS. Whoe'er thou be, in Sparta's rough and rocky
ways

That standest like a dream of flowers and fervent days,
Rose-wrought and clad with a diviner air, live ever !

HELEN. Hail, Prince, for so thou seemest ! Welcome !

PARIS. I have never,

Save in the immortal goddesses, seen with my eyes
Beauty passing the beauty of women, till now you rise
Like a new throne in heaven.

HELEN. What word is this you utter
Of the immortal goddesses ?

PARIS. Yea, for the utter

And incommunicable beauty of those three most high,
Here and Athene and Aphrodite, I, even I,
Paris, the son of Priam, prince of tower-built Ilion,
Saw naked ; for they chose me, me out of the million
On million of the eyes of mortals, to behold
No borrowed feature but their very beauty, and hold
The scales of judgment, weighing to which divinest splendor
Of such the supreme three, it were but due to render
The golden apple by unbidden Ate flung,
Marked " To the fairest."

HELEN. Tell us, prithee, then, among
Such beauty which supreme for beauty thou declarest,
O thou that judgest gods !

PARIS. Because I named her fairest,
Devious-minded Aphrodite has sworn an oath
That the most fair of women shall give me her troth
And couch with me in Troy. But thou—who is above thee,
Who of the daughters of men ?

HELEN. And thou wouldst that I love thee ?
Fie ! this is a low thought thou pluckest from its sheath.

CHORUS. A shameless word has crossed the doorsill of
his teeth.

PARIS. Shame dwells not with the gods nor in speech
* which the gods warrant.

HELEN. Say no more, lest the King's wrath overwhelm thee
in its torrent.

Seek her among the maidens ; I am wife and Queen.

CHORUS. Such impudence of evil we have never seen.

PARIS. No king's wrath terrifies me, but lest anger lighten
From that clear brow of thine. Those lifted lids can frighten
More than the lidless eyes of Death.

HELEN. They make not die.

PARIS. Yea, if they slay my soul, what though the limbs
live ? I

Am dead, no less. Be merciful as thou art mighty !

HELEN. What god burns in my veins ? Is it thou,
Aphrodite ? . . .

Counsel me, girls ; the man is fair to look upon,
Persuasive, and a goddess urges his cause on.

CHORUS. Surely the man is goodly, and the gods not to
be thwarted.

HELEN. A goddess also hinders me, the Queen of wide-
courted

Heaven, lady of marriage-beds, and sets my soul at odds.

CHORUS. We counsel that thou give due honor to both gods.

HELEN. When each gives each the lie ! Your counsel profits little.

PARIS. The will of the goddess is not weak nor her words brittle.

Knewest thou ever an oracle that went unfulfilled ?
If thou deny me, then needs must be what she willed
Other, and thou art not the fairest among women.
Who shall say that, with eyes that sight grows not yet dim
in ?

And since thou art the fairest, as all men may see,
Be pious to the gods and pitiful to me.

HELEN. No ; lest men say I make myself to be the foremost,
Too eager for the doom ordained. And men adore most
Those who exalt themselves not. If the fairest indeed,
Let her declare me so by no ambiguous deed.
No word nor will of mine her oracle fulfilling,
Let her put forth her power and master me unwilling.
And thou, if I be she of whom the goddess speaks,
Take me despite myself, and despite all the Greeks.

[VOCONIUS, *stepping out of his part, turns to*
LUCIUS *and recites by way of Epilogue the*
lines that follow.]

VOCONIUS. I have dared higher than the Muses will,
A song too splendid for my simple skill.
I am not Paris, to see beauty bare ;
Not Ovid I, such visions to declare.
Forgive, Apollo ; let some greater bard
Achieve the raptures proved for me too hard.
Is there not here a poet with a lyre
To end my broken song with thine own fire ;

A greater prince than all the line of Troy,
And dear to Venus as the Dardan boy?
If such there be, a new-born god of day,
Let him, compassionate of my feebleness lay,
Assume the rôle too heavy for my hands
And take the gods' best gift: there Helen stands!

CHORUS. For the gods that brought Helen to birth
Gave to Cæsar the rule of the earth.

[*The doors of the palace open and GUENEVERE appears between the pillars, attended by BURSA.*]

LUCIUS. *There* Helen stands!

[*A pause. Sensation.*]

BURSA. I come late to the feast;
But bring a forfeit makes my fault seem golden, —
Guenevere, Queen of Britain.

GUENEVERE. Which is Cæsar? . . .
Since Cæsar wars on women and his arms
Have made me prisoner, I sue to Cæsar
For leave to guard one royal privilege,
My privacy.

LUCIUS. Guards, slaves, attend the Queen!
Be her desires commands!

[*Exit GUENEVERE, attended.*]

Break up the feast!

And each one to his house!

[*Exeunt all except GALAHAULT, METELLA,
VOCONIA, and PUBLIUS.*]

METELLA. Sir Galahault!
At midnight, by the ilex! It may be
That I can find a way to set the Queen

At liberty — perhaps yourself as well —

I know not. I must set my wits at work. [Exit.]

PUBLIUS (*approaching*.) Fear nothing for the Queen,
Sir Galahault.

I know not what Metella said to you,
But I have a shrewd guess. Well, do not heed her.
I have her interests at heart, and yours,
As well as mine, — for hers and yours *are* mine
In this. Believe me, 't is the prudent part
To be of my advice. If 't please you come
To my apartment in an hour from now,
I 'll give you weighty reasons.

GALAHULT. Very well. [Exit PUBLIUS.
Lady (*approaching* VOCONIA, *who is weeping*), our
northern masques are rough to yours,
And I perhaps no critic ; but methought
Your Helen had a grace, a charm, like April
When she comes up with lilies from the south.
If not the Helen that the minstrels sing,
Standing upon the battlements of Troy,
Great with having much lived, no less a Helen,
Such as she might have been ere she had loved,
Sweet with the bud's life, wistful, incomplete,
And beautiful with unacquainted eyes.
I am much beholden to you. [Going.]

Enter VOCONIUS.

Sir, your comedy
Was worth a better epilogue. [Exit.]
VOCONIUS. Indeed

VOCONIUS. And who but you were but a moment
since

All for this Cæsar, eager for his favor,
And hot for all this life you hold so cheap?

VOCONIA. I have had a bandage taken from my
eyes ;

And the poor pennies that I groped for seem
As nothing to the treasure of beautiful things
I see about me. Yes, I love . . . I love !
Go you to Cæsar, if you will ; but I,
Although my hero take no thought for me,
Will follow him and serve him till I die.

VOCONIUS. This is a mere child's folly. Come
with me.

VOCONIA. Let me stay here alone a moment first.
It is a fancy ; but I have a need
Somehow to be here quiet and not think.
I will not keep you long : . . . I beg of you . . .

VOCONIUS. You are a fool. *[Exit.*

VOCONIA. I saw him coming back.

[Withdraws into the shadows.]

Enter GALAHAULT and DAGONET.

GALAHAULT. . . . So many things at once I knew
not of.

I had no notion you were not in Britain ;
You startled me.

DAGONET. I would I could get word to the Queen
that I am here. Even a dog counts, if it is your own
dog.

GALAHAULT. Remain you here awhile. I know
not yet

What is to happen. There are plots afoot.

Publius and Metella severally

Seek to have private speech with me to-night.

Wait here, until I know what comes of it.

DAGONET. By the mass, I cannot. I am a slave.
I belong to Voconius. And it is even now time that
I should be within doors. He has paid good money
for me, believing me to excel in the copying of manu-
scripts. My function is chiefly to transcribe his
verses.

GALAHAULT. A scrivener, Dagonet? How do you
manage that?

DAGONET. Farm it out, as his steward does his
rents. The Pope being with us secretly, I stand well
with the monks here. It is ticklish walking; a tight-
rope is nothing to it. But I hope not to tumble
until— What was that?

GALAHAULT. Where?

DAGONET. Something flitting in the shadows
there. . . . [*Starts toward the palace as if to
head off VOCONIA, who comes forward.*]

VOCONIA. Sir, I have overheard your conversation;
I did not mean to . . . Pray you, pardon me. . . .
Oh, I will not betray you. . . . 'T is not that.
I'd serve you. . . . Let him stay with you to-night.
I will excuse his absence to my brother—
Say I employed him in my own affairs. . . .

Hold! (*To DAGONET.*) You, sirrah, I bid you serve
this lord

To-night; he is your master until morning.

You have my orders to remain here. [*Going.*]

GALAHAULT. Stay!

VOCONIA. Oh, sir, my brother waits for me.

GALAHAULT. No less

Let me conduct you to him. You must hear

My thanks, lady, whether you will or no.

[*Exeunt GALAHAULT and VOCONIA. When they are well off, DAGONET whistles.*]

Enter GUENEVERE, on the balcony, followed by

LUCIUS. DAGONET *withdraws under the trees.*

GUENEVERE. The air is sultry. I stifle in the
room.

LUCIUS (*unclasping a girdle*). Pearls to a princess
are a futile gift;

But note the workmanship — what craft of line!

Intractable jade carved intricately and free

As woven frondage, and the pearls in it

I know not by what miracle of art

Made part of it and better than themselves

Like berries in the mistletoe. Receive it

As earnest of the rate I hold you at.

GUENEVERE. Why, would you set a price upon my
head?

I cannot else be rated.

LUCIUS. Nay, but as

A conquered prince may render nominal tribute,

Itself a trifle, token none the less
He doth confess the victor suzerain.

GUENEVERE. Strange victor, who must ask her
vassal's leave
To go or come!

LUCIUS. May not a vassal pluck
His master by the sleeve and hold him so
A moment, while he has a suit to him?

GUENEVERE. You hold yourself no vassal to me,
Cæsar.

LUCIUS. Oh, but I do. You will not take the sense
In which you are more powerful than Cæsar
And take your captors captive.

GUENEVERE. Do I so?
Now this is marvellous.

LUCIUS. I do not think
My meaning is so dark to you, although
You make it seem so.

GUENEVERE. Pray you, be content
To let it seem so, then . . . You of the south
Cry out upon our northern mists and fogs,
But I have found that these make many things
Fair that I do not find so in the sun.

LUCIUS. Then let this speak me to you through a
veil.

GUENEVERE. It is most beautiful; and a lordly
gift,
Worthy of prince to prince.

LUCIUS. But you refuse it.

GUENEVERE. I am your captive.

LUCIUS. You are Queen of Britain.

GUENEVERE. And does Rome send a friendly gift
to Britain? . . .

Where is my throne, my state, my ceremony,
That I should give due honor to the gift?

LUCIUS. Your throne is where you are, your pres-
ence state

Beyond all pageantry. . . . You will not? . . .

[*He replaces the girdle and is silent.*]

Madam, you are too proud. You are a queen,
But I am Cæsar.

GUENEVERE. Our imperial cousin,
Therefore. I know the boast the Cæsars make,
That kings are but their dukes and deputies;
But we of Britain do not brook your boast.
Nor, Lucius Cæsar, were I but myself,
No queen at all, would I accept the gifts
Of any, even Cæsar, not being free.

LUCIUS. Why, let the politics alone, then. Take it
We are but man and woman, you and I,
Lucius and Guenevere! I bring no gifts,
I only see how beautiful you are —
Nay, I have looked on beauty many times
But never until now on something lambent
And magical and not to be expressed,
Which is perhaps what they that dwell in Mars
Or Algol may call beauty. Mere perfection
Is cold and lacks the wizardry of charm,

The melody and moonlight of desire,
That makes you glow with something far and fey.

GUENEVERE. What time is it?

LUCIUS. What time is it? I know not
Why, madam, what I speak of is not light,
Nor to be turned off with a light reply.

GUENEVERE. I have been told that I am beautiful
By many men and mirrors. . . . So be it;
I am more interested in the time.

LUCIUS. Are you a woman or a marble goddess?
No marble, certes! Yet the gods themselves,
Or so they fable, found delight in gifts
And praise; but you recoil from these and harden.
What can I do to show you that I love you?
Just love, perhaps — ay, that is best. No price
To buy love with, but love. If you but knew,
If you would but believe how I desire you,
I think such love would breed some love in you;
At least some favor, some sweet courtesy.

GUENEVERE. I will believe you love me when you
are silent;
For what is my desire would be yours too,
If you indeed loved.

LUCIUS. Is that love that is
So mild it can be mastered? Is it love
That cares so little it can yield its hope
Without a struggle? I do not love you so.
To lack you is a gap I cannot fill
With moral maxims.

GUENEVERE. Nor with noble deeds !

LUCIUS. Oh, think what we might live ! The
world should be

The lackey of our pleasure. Samarcand
Shall clothe our limbs in silks and India
Make sweet the rooms with sandal ; wines from Crete,
Iberia, and the Rhone ; the Arabian berry,
Rumored of far infrequent travellers,
Brought first to the West for us — Oh, we shall sit
Like the old gods, Olympic . . . while the smoke
Of the world's hecatombs comes up to us,
The lords of the earth, the gods of it . . . [*Touching
her arm.*]

GUENEVERE. Slave !

LUCIUS. Slave ? . . slave — ?

GUENEVERE. Oh ! . . . Throw thy crown for
serfs to scramble for !

Go find some squire that loves and sue to be
His knave till thou learn what it is to be
A lover and a knight !

LUCIUS. God ! . . . Oh, I 'll wring
A bitter-sweet revenge of you !

GUENEVERE. Thou wilt ?
What wilt thou do ?

LUCIUS. This first. [*Seizes her forcibly and kisses
her.*]

GUENEVERE. Ah ! — Oh ! . . . oh ! . . .
Death ! thou hast dared — thou . . . Gah ! Wert thou
a snake,

More horror would not shudder down my soul.
Take thyself hence, that like a leprosy
Infectest the foul night ; go — Think not, Lucius,
My soul is such a thing as fears may stifle —
Blottest thou my sight still ? Go, go, go, go, go ! . . .

LUCIUS. Madam, you are superb. I am no
tyrant, —

At least no vandal. I can no more mar
So fine a passion with an after-scene
Than chip a Venus of Praxiteles.
So, fare you well — until we meet again . . .
I am more yours than ever. [Exit.]

DAGONET (*gliding out of the shadows*). S-s-s-t!

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

SCENE. *Night. A wild part of the Campagna. Enter PUBLIUS, BURSA, GALAHAULT, GUENEVERE and Soldiers. PUBLIUS and BURSA somewhat apart from the others.*

BURSA. Halt!

AN OFFICER. Halt!

BURSA. This is the place.

PUBLIUS. Is there some shelter

Near by?

BURSA. A sort of cavern.

PUBLIUS. Let the Queen

And Galahault be conveyed there.

BURSA. They will be

As well under the stars; 't is a rough place.

PUBLIUS. Let them be made as easeful as may be;
But we should be alone when Launcelot comes.

BURSA. I hardly credit that he comes alone.

PUBLIUS. At first he would not, but at last consented
On Varro's safeguard.

BURSA. Varro's!

PUBLIUS. There's some oath
Of brother-in-arms between them.

BURSA.

How is that?

PUBLIUS. Some friendship that began when
Launcelot

Held Varro prisoner.

BURSA.

He takes his word?

Why, — what prevents us? — we might hold him
captive,

And — think of it — he . . .

PUBLIUS.

No; Varro might, not we:

The soldiers are all his. Besides, he has

A special and unlimited commission

From Cæsar, making his command to-night

An independent service, that reports

Direct to Cæsar and to him alone.

BURSA. Not even to me?

PUBLIUS.

No; you are here, as I am

An envoy, not a general.

BURSA.

Has Cæsar

Put such a slight upon me? Not command

My officer? Had I been told of this,

I had seen all your politics in hell

Ere I had come!

PUBLIUS.

It has all been conceived,

Planned, executed in so short a time

There was no chance to tell you. Only thus

Would Varro pledge his word; and Launcelot

Would have no other surety. Be not angry.

Consider, 't is but for a night; and then,

The exigence. Why stand upon a scruple,

If it turns the scale ; . . . but rather than lose all,
Be somewhat blind to what you cannot help.

BURSA. I like it not.

PUBLIUS. Nor I ; but failure less.

GUENEVERE. Why have you brought us to this
lonely place ?

PUBLIUS. Madam, we serve the Emperor's de-
sires . . .

But, in this case, believe me, yours as well.

GUENEVERE. The Emperor's desires will be ill
served

If you serve mine indeed ! (*Continuing as if to her-
self.*) They were served well

If some strange sudden evil fell on him . . .

PUBLIUS. Madam, you mistake me—and the
Emperor.

That Cæsar loves you, I can no wise doubt,
When I look on you ; I should wonder rather
That there were any one who loved you not,
Being great enough to dare. But divine Cæsar,
Who is as God over men's earthly fates,
Ordains not for himself but for their weal
Whom Heaven commits to his authority.
See now how you misjudge him ; we are here
For your sake, madam . . . to bring to you a friend . . .
Sir Launcelot. . . .

GUENEVERE. It will rejoice me much
To see a knightly face of mine own court . . .
But what does godlike Cæsar's omniprescience

Discern in this "for those whom Heaven commits
To his authority"? Some general good,
Doubtless, beyond the pleasure of a queen.

PUBLIUS. It were a general good the war should
cease;

And were that general good so brought to pass
That the same means that wrought it wrought as well
Some courtesy particular to one
To whom the general good itself might yield
A little and the world yet be no loser, —

GUENEVERE. Why, what a mouse of compliment
is this

The mountain labors with! Come, sir, your point.
I have no will to end the war — what then?

PUBLIUS. But if it end for Cæsar's good and
yours?

GUENEVERE. How can my good and Cæsar's be
the same?

PUBLIUS. By nothing that is not your heart's desire.
You'll say so when you know . . .

BURSA.

Hark!

PUBLIUS.

Are they coming?

BURSA. It is their horses' hoofs upon the rocks.

PUBLIUS. Madam, and you, most noble Galahault,
Pray you, withdraw a little . . . Officer! . . .

(*To Guenevere.*) This will all clear itself. (*To Gala-*
hault.) That which I spoke of

Is sudden ripe; he meets us here to-night.

GALAHULT. Sir Launcelot?

PUBLIUS.

Ay; you were thus

much wrong, —

Perhaps in the rest, too.

GALAHAUT. Never believe it; he will not.

PUBLIUS. Well, we shall see. You hold with us if

he does — [*Exeunt GUENEVERE, GALAHAUT and Soldiers.*]

And if he does not, there's no faith in reason . . .

What, sullen still? Why, look you, man, we tremble

Upon the dizzy edge of ruin. Fail

To win this lover-warrior, Launcelot —

I hope we shall not — but if we should fail,

What's left to us but death, or loss of all

That makes life life, — place, pride, power, riches, all

Blown to the winds like dust from Stromboli!

Be not deceived that Galahaut is taken.

The empire's lost; Rome only still is ours,

And no hope save division in the foe.

At such a time fits not to stand on forms.

Come, man, your help.

BURSA. Why, such help as I can;

But I've no stomach for it.

Enter VARRO and LAUNCELOT.

VARRO. Yonder they stand.

I'll wait apart here where the soldiers are.

LAUNCELOT. My friend!

VARRO. Well, well, no words.

[*They clasp hands and exit VARRO.*]

PUBLIUS. You know each other?

LAUNCELOT. Well, in the field.

PUBLIUS.

We are both know-

ing to this ;

Speak, therefore, to us both.

LAUNCELOT.

You say you have

A certain letter. What's your price for it ?

PUBLIUS. Oh, sir, you gallop.

LAUNCELOT.

I am not come here,

Leaving my camp with this night-muffled haste,

For smirk and roundabout of envoy phrase.

You say you have a letter ; I reply,

Let me look on it. If it be what you

Report it, — take the ransom of a king. . . .

PUBLIUS. You rate it highly . . . but I highlier.

I would not barter it for aught so gross

As gold ; in fine, the thing is priceless, sir.

But what I would not sell my enemy,

I'd give my friend.

LAUNCELOT. Give ? Is it possible !

PUBLIUS. Ay, to my friend.

LAUNCELOT.

Friend ? What mean

you by that ?

BURSA. Pledge us your friendship, noble Launcelot,

And we will send your letter back with gifts.

LAUNCELOT. You seem to speak me fair and
honorable ;

But yet your pardon, sirs, if I mistrust

The sudden friendship of an ancient foe. . . .

Friendship ? You cannot mean that comrade love

That knits men closer than the clasp of kin.
That is not born of compact nor discretion,
Nor ripened in a night.

PUBLIUS. May 't grow to that!
But there must be a friendship to begin with.

LAUNCELOT. You say well ; and indeed I must be friends

With those who friend me. I were ingrate else.

BURSA. Here's my hand on it. I loved you for a foe.

And fought you as a man might clip his mistress ;
But side by side instead of face to face,
We 'll rout the very thunder.

LAUNCELOT. Side by side . . .
Side by side . . .

PUBLIUS (*hastily*). You shall be king in Britain,
And Guenevere your queen.

LAUNCELOT. Treason!

PUBLIUS. No treason ;
Treason is to the State, and that is Cæsar,
To whom your king and you alike owe fealty.

LAUNCELOT. That is our quarrel; I'll not argue it. Treason or no treason to the State, it is Black treason to my friend and to my cause.

PUBLIUS. Are you so slow to treason to your friend?

Oh, sir, you cannot be both true and false
At once. I know you loyalty itself,
Saying to Arthur — who could blame you that? —

But true to him you are not. Then be true
At least to your own course and to yourself.
Play not the hypocrite to your own soul
To lull yourself with loyalty by halves.
Being against him, oh be wholly so —
No secret enemy, but an open one!
And since a fate is on you to be false,
Be bravely false and reap the fruits of it.

LAUNCELOT. I am no hypocrite; I love the King,
Howe'er my life bely it.

PUBLIUS. Love him? Why?
What loves he, think you? Not the Queen. Not you.
Not anything but his ambition. What!
Would he not sacrifice you both to-day
For what he calls the welfare of the State,
Which is his own? Put he not under foot
His early loves, to make a stairway of
To mount the throne? . . .

LAUNCELOT. You understand him not.
'T is no defect of heart in him, but rather
That his great heart has room for all the world,
And for that million-throated need endures
His friends' denial as his own. Were we
Not willing, we should not be worthy of him.

BURSA. And call you this cold-blooded mask a
friend?

PUBLIUS. If the world take him for its Cæsar, ware;
King Stork may make King Log a world's regret.
The rigor of his rule already 'gins

To gall the people. The army chafes at it.
Even the leaders are rebellion-ripe
And wait but to be plucked. 'T is love of you
More than the King that keeps them faithful now.
You'll not believe me; but yourself shall hear
The lips of Galahault himself declare it.
(To BURSA.) Summon him.

BURSA.

Officer!

[*The Officer appears, speaks with
BURSA and retires. Meanwhile:*]

PUBLIUS.

You shall be king,

And the war-wearied world again have peace.

LAUNCELOT. I laid aside a crown to follow him.

PUBLIUS. And Guenevere your queen. . . . (*Pause.*)

LAUNCELOT.

There spoke

the Devil!

PUBLIUS. You yet shall say I am your better
angel. . . .

Enter GALAHAULT.

Sir Launcelot would be assured 't is true
That, were he reconciled with Cæsar, half
Your armies would come with him. So I told him;
So you told me; forsooth, his modesty
Will not believe it without confirmation.

GALAHAULT. Do not believe that ever I believed
You would be aught but Launcelot, — a name
That knighthood knows not from itself.

PUBLIUS.

Hold, hold!

You gave me reason —

GALAHAULT. And for my own ends
I did so —

BURSA. We are tricked.

PUBLIUS. Not wholly. Sir,
You'll not deny that it is Launcelot,
Not Arthur, that the army loves. For him
They throw their caps up; and to follow him
They would not scruple, lead he where he may.

GALAHAULT. All this is true.

PUBLIUS. They'd follow him?

GALAHAULT. Doubtless,
They'd follow him.

PUBLIUS. You'd follow him yourself?

GALAHAULT. He knows my love for him. No
 fault, no crime
Could make me leave him. Could he be a traitor, —
As he will not, — I'd know that it must be
From truth to a higher cause. . . .

PUBLIUS. But should that be?

GALAHAULT. I have said all I will.

PUBLIUS (*aside to BURSA*). Take him away;
And let him not be near the Queen.

[*Exeunt BURSA and GALAHAULT.*]

 You see,
You are the leader; but where'er you lead,
He means to follow. With a nice reserve
He waits your index, will not speed nor hamper
By hint nor shadow of his inner thought
The gathering of your true untold desire

Into decision, — be it what it may.

He leaves you free . . . not his to watch the stars,
Nor change the helm . . . but once your course is set,
That's his course, that's the course of the best half
Of Arthur's army. Where they'd shrink themselves,
With you they would not question; where they'd fear,
With you they'd dare damnations, face the unknown,
March blindly into darkness, leaving the quarrel
Of what they do and why, to you. It is
The leader, not the cause, that men believe in;
Save now and then a mind — and that's a leader.

LAUNCELOT. So much the more must he whom
accident

Makes leader, try the honor of his deeds,
Lest he debase the mint of many hearts.

PUBLIUS. It is in honor's name I call upon you.
I have spoken to you of power; but do not think
I hold you one of those who to be crowned
Would stoop to be unworthy of a crown . . .
Yet to be king is good, if worthily . . .
I have spoken to you of unfettered love;
But do not think I hold you such an one
As for his pleasure would ride down the rights
Of even the poorest peasant in the way.
Yet if a great necessity decree
We pluck out honor from a fiery shame
And pleasure follow for an overplus,
What god shall bid us put away that joy?
Joy is not in itself an evil thing,

But only to make joy our chief concern,
Usurping honor's kingship in our hearts.

LAUNCELOT. Where is there honor in foul treachery?

PUBLIUS. Love hath its honor, too. Is there no
treason

But to your king? Do you owe no allegiance
To her of whom the earldoms of your soul
Are held by homage? Do you owe no faith
To her whom you have put in jeopardy —
Even by your love of her — so great that now,
Even now, at mere imagination of it,
I wonder how your breath can come and go
So steadily? Can you condemn the Queen,
With this impassive face, to wrong and shame, —
Yield that proud spirit to the bitterness
Of contumely, — let the scavenger crows
Of court and camp perch upon her fair name
And pick the white bones of her murdered honor?
Why, after that the body's death were nought;
And yet that she should die in agonies,
That supreme miracle of flesh be given
To the red flames to scar and shrivel and blacken
Into a mummied horror, while the slow nerves,
Shrieking with dilatory pangs —

LAUNCELOT.

What mean you?

PUBLIUS. Burned at the stake, — so reads your
Briton law,

For the high treason of adultery
In queens. The annals of your country tell

That Goneril, the wife of Calader,
Endured that punishment. It is the law.
You know well that King Arthur, even if he
Were judge of his own sons as Brutus was,
Holds the integrity of the ordered state
So high above the individual life
He would not flinch one comma of the law.
Burned at the stake — will he do violence
To the law, his god, to save her?

LAUNCELOT.

He is just.

PUBLIUS. And pitiless. He would not, though he
loved her.

And will he love her, when he knows the truth?
Worse in his eyes than faithless to himself,
The insulter of his crown! . . . Or will he spare her
For your sake, who betrayed him with a kiss? . . .
There is a justice so implacable
Wrong is not so unjust. Will you leave her
To the mercy of that justice? Sir, her safety
Is at your will. If you betray her, what
Remains? No hope . . . unless in the protection
Of Cæsar.

LAUNCELOT. Cæsar?

PUBLIUS. Cæsar . . . and Cæsar's love!

She is within our lines, a prisoner;
For, knowing of her coming from her letter,
The Emperor had an ambush set and seized her.
He will defend her, but he will ask payment, —
Her love . . . or else your sword. What, do you still

Hesitate? If the Emperor should fall,
After the Queen were made his concubine,
And she should fall again in Arthur's hands? . . .
Her beauty hath so wrought on Cæsar's eyes
That only for the great respect he bears you
And for the hope that he may win your sword
Does he delay his pleasure. Scorn our friendship,
You give her proud fame to be spat upon,
Her body to the fire . . . or Cæsar's arms . . .
Or both perhaps, if Arthur conquer Cæsar. . . .
Are you a man, and can hear this unmoved?
I'll not believe it. I myself am stirred
Almost to tears for pity of her lot.
If you are not to passion, then, poor lady,
She is indeed forsaken. You forget,
Perhaps, the empire of her loveliness,
And time and distance have made dull your love.
But when you see her rise into your sight,
Supreme and radiant as Orion, when
The silent horror of her beauty pleads
Against her doom, then, then each word of mine
Will, like the dragon's teeth that Cadmus sowed,
Crop armed invasion in your soul and peal
Her cause with trumpets.— Ho, there! Bring forth
the Queen! . . .
Why, now you start. Ay, sir, the Queen is here.
I'll leave you with her. When you look on her,
Think of the fire . . . and think of Cæsar's love . . .
Think of the smell of burning flesh . . . and then

The silken scented luxury . . . the hush
Of secret dusky chambers . . . and the glare
Of flame upon the faces of the crowd. . . .

Enter GUENEVERE. Exit PUBLIUS.

LAUNCELOT. Guenevere!

GUENEVERE. Launcelot!

LAUNCELOT. Thou art more beautiful even than
my dreams of thee.

GUENEVERE. I am more glad of thee than even my
heart foreknew.

LAUNCELOT. Man is not God enough that his weak
dreams,

Even from thy shadow in his memory,
Should mould so beautiful a world as thou.

GUENEVERE. Thou standest tall between me and
the sky,

Most like a spirit. Art thou real, love?

LAUNCELOT. As real as the gleam of thee that plays
Across the night like starlight on a pool,
Swift witchery and the dark deeps underneath.

GUENEVERE. My heart is deep with calm and light
with joy.

LAUNCELOT. Thou art a night of mystery and
stars. [*Pause.*]

GUENEVERE. I think the whole world is a song
of love;

I think the whole world swims with lyric joy.

LAUNCELOT. Thy voice is like a still star sped
across the hush.

GUENEVERE. There is another voice that cools out
of the night.

LAUNCELOT. The angel of our love . . . It has
been long . . .

How great a mystery you seem to me
I cannot tell. You seem to have become
One with the tides and night and the unknown . . .
My child . . . your child . . . whence come? — by
what strange forge
Wrought of ourselves and dreams and the great deep
Into a life? I feel as if I stood
Where God had passed by, leaving all the place
Aflame with him.

GUENEVERE. How tell the secrets of
His coming — the weird vibrance of the room,
As if the chords of ghostly violins
Thrilled into looming dreams where'er you came.
From the beginning, ere he was conceived,
The air was quick with him.

LAUNCELOT. The strangeness is
That I, who have not borne him, am aware,
I too, of intimacy with his soul.
It is as I were just awaked from sleep
And one should tell me of events that passed
While I was sleeping, and I knew them not;
Yet at each word confused memories
Stir somewhere deeper than the waking mind,
And I am conscious that I was a part
Of things I knew not of.

GUENEVERE. He is watched over;
Where he is, one is brushed by the unseen,
And the air thickens with the hush of shadows.

LAUNCELOT. What will he be? My thought leaps
to the future
And pictures him a thousand different ways,
But always something starred above his fellows.

GUENEVERE. Oh, do not haste the heavy-footed
years.

Let him live out his pudgy dimpled life —
Dear baby — without fret of what 's to be.
Other lives . . . boyhood, manhood . . . in their turn!
I want him as he is. What will make up
For those ten little aimless fingers? Who
Will ever give me back his helplessness?

LAUNCELOT. His babyhood is not so real to me
As he is. You have seen him. Is he like you?

GUENEVERE. He is like you.

LAUNCELOT. I think he is like you;
And you forget to look for it in him,
Losing remembrance of yourself in me,
I have not seen him.

GUENEVERE. I may never see him . . .

LAUNCELOT. Your face is beautiful as one who
thinks
Of death, with seaward eyes.

GUENEVERE. It is worth all.
I know the rapture now the martyrs had,
When this was Nero's and Domitian's Rome.

I would not yield a pang of any woe
That I have suffered, so wrought into one
The pain is with the vision and the joy,
The peace and all the wonder of your soul.

LAUNCELOT. We are more far off from the world
of ills

Than Vega or Arcturus from our feet.
I feel as if it were some other I
That captains Arthur's army, moves, speaks, thinks, —
Some machine curiously made half alive,
Whose very feelings are mechanical.
But when what somehow seems to be indeed
I, lifts its head above the waves, I know
That all that turmoil does not rive nor jar
The bases of my soul. [*A bugle, far off, faintly.*]

GUENEVERE. Oh, how alone
We are, as if the stars and only we
Watched in the darkness! [*Pause.*]

LAUNCELOT. What is it that gleams
Like a coil of wan light in your eddying hair?

GUENEVERE. A silver serpent. Ylen gave it me
In Lyonesse.

LAUNCELOT. You used to wear a dagger.

GUENEVERE. They took it from me.

LAUNCELOT. Oh, your hair, your hair!
It is like dark water in a little light. . . .
Oh, your beautiful hair, Guenevere!
I let my fingers drown in it . . . Oh,
I let my soul drown in it, Guenevere.

[*A noise without, as of a shield that clangs
falling to the ground.*]

GUENEVERE. Oh, what was that?

LAUNCELOT. A soldier's shield that fell.

GUENEVERE. I thought it was a summons to my soul.

LAUNCELOT. The whole night seems unearthly and
remote,

And every common thing a prodigy.

GUENEVERE. The earth and air are tense and augu-
ral,

And tremulous with the unseen. I think

It is our souls that thus compel the night.

LAUNCELOT. Oh, your beautiful hands, Guenevere!
They are like moonlight lying on my arm.

[*Kisses her hands; and then her cheek and
throat, passionately. A wind rises, and
stirs gustily in the trees.*]

GUENEVERE. Oh, the wind, the wind! It blows
against my face

As if the night were waking.

LAUNCELOT. Look at me!

I want to look deep down into your eyes.

I want to find your soul down in your eyes.

I want to find your kisses in your soul.

GUENEVERE. Oh, you are like the passion of the
morning

When all the kissed earth wakens into life.

LAUNCELOT. I worship you, I worship you, I wor-
ship you, —

As a saint worships heaven I worship you ;
You ray the darkness like the starry heaven,
And like the raptured woods I worship you . . .

GUENEVERE. No . . . somewhere deeper than all
me and thee . . .

LAUNCELOT. Oh, your beautiful soul, Guene-
vere! . . .

VARRO (*without*). Sir Launcelot!

GUENEVERE. Who calls!

LAUNCELOT. Ha! It is Varro's voice.

Enter VARRO.

VARRO. The morning wind arises and the east
Is faintly gray. My duty that you be
Safely within your lines before the dawn
Narrows the time. When will it please you start?

LAUNCELOT. Why, now. [*Exit VARRO*]. There
is no time but is both well
And ill. [*Kisses her; then detaches his dagger
and passes it to her silently. She
conceals it.*]

*Enter PUBLIUS; and VARRO, BURSA, GALAHAULT,
and Soldiers in the background. A pause.*

PUBLIUS. Well, are you friends with Cæsar?

LAUNCELOT. No.

CURTAIN.

ACT V.

SCENE. *Rome. A Room in GUENEVERE'S Apartment in the Palace of LUCIUS. Large window-doors at back, open. Balcony beyond, overlooking the gardens, and the streets of Rome. VOCONIUS and VOCONIA, meeting.*

VOCONIUS. Is the Queen stirring yet?

VOCONIA. She is at breakfast.

I came here, as you ordered. Tell me why
You yield your former plans so suddenly —
How comes it that you give commands in the palace? —
What has happened that 't is Guenevere, not I,
You scheme for Cæsar now? . . .

VOCONIUS. The Emperor
Will be here in a moment. Let the Queen
Know he is coming. . . Oh, Voconia,
Our fortunes are at the top. Publius and Bursa
Have fallen, they have fallen, they are overthrown,
And I am nearest Cæsar! . . .

VOCONIA. What has happened?

VOCONIUS. It seems they blundered in some enter-
prise
To win Sir Launcelot to us . . . Cæsar is furious. . . .
He has thrown Publius into a dungeon —

And Galahault — Bursa has not returned
To the palace yet. . . .

VOCONIA.

Galahault?

VOCONIUS.

Galahault, too;

He did not say what was expected of him.

Cæsar would scourge the soldiers that went with them,
Pillory the pikes, so bitter is his rage.

VOCONIA. Let Galahault be released.

VOCONIUS.

Still in that tune? . . .

Why, if you will . . . my power will reach that far —

Not were it Publius — and since it thwarts

Success no longer, love him if you like —

Love twenty, love the army! Only stay

With Guenevere, report her thoughts to me,

And, as you may, incline her thoughts to Cæsar.

Enter LUCIUS.

Go, tell her that the Emperor is here.

[Exit VOCONIA.]

LUCIUS. What says she?

VOCONIUS. That she finds the Queen is calm,

Does not avoid your name, but speaks of you

With courtesy, if not with tenderness.

Believe me, she 'll do much.

LUCIUS.

Why, that is good.

VOCONIUS. But asks her price.

LUCIUS.

They all do that. What is it?

VOCONIUS. That which I think you will not wish to
grant,

But yet may grant without too great a loss, —

The release of Galahault.

LUCIUS.

No, by the empire!

VOCONIUS. Remember he is not as Publius,
A fruitless servant, but an open foe —
To be watched, guarded, spied on, not to be punished.
Consider, too, 't were well Voconia
Should be your debtor . . . True, we may command
her;

You are her emperor, I am her brother,
Head of her house; but you 'd have service of her
That 's not to be compelled. She is in love
With Galahault; her gratitude and joy
Will bind her to your cause.

LUCIUS.

Let him go free;

[VOCONIUS *sits at table and writes.*]

Enter VOCONIA.

But I 'll have double vengeance on the others.

VOCONIUS. Your signature. [LUCIUS *signs the
release.*]

VOCONIA. The Queen regrets she must
Beg Cæsar to attend a little while.

VOCONIUS. This will release Sir Galahault. See
you to it. [Exit VOCONIA.]

LUCIUS. I 'll find some way to make them plead to
purpose.

Bursa, whom I have —

Enter a Messenger.

Well! What is it? Speak!
Is your news pepper? Does it strangle you?

MESSENGER. Most mighty —

LUCIUS. Well, well, lobster!

MESSENGER. The enemy
Storms the Flaminian Gate.

LUCIUS. What! Where's Bursa?

MESSENGER. Gone to the walls, to captain the
defence.

[*Exit, upon a gesture from LUCIUS.*]

LUCIUS. Why do they strike to-day? Fools! . . .

I have need

Of Bursa; that must be deferred. Voconius, —

VOCONIUS. Cæsar!

LUCIUS. Publius is imprisoned in the crypt?

VOCONIUS. Ay, Cæsar.

LUCIUS. He will not sleep well there.

VOCONIUS. Truly, the flags are hard.

LUCIUS. And cold. I'd have him sleep.

The old man has not closed his eyes all night.

See that he sleeps soon.

VOCONIUS. He shall sleep sound, my
lord.

LUCIUS. See to it now . . . Where is my secre-
tary?

VOCONIUS. I have a slave attends me here in the
gallery,
That has great skill in writing.

LUCIUS. Bring him with you
When you return. Be quickly here again. . . .

[*Exit VOCONIUS.*]

Enter METELLA.

He was grown irksome, and his grip on the empire
Was too tentacular.

METELLA. Cæsar!

LUCIUS. Well, it is done;
Let him teach Lucifer diplomacy . . .

METELLA. Cæsar . . .

LUCIUS. Well done, I doubt. . . .

METELLA. There was a time
I had no need to call on Cæsar thrice.

Have I grown husky, that my voice no more
Bells clear across the thicket of your moods?

LUCIUS. You have a sweet voice, madam.

METELLA. Cæsar! . . .

LUCIUS. Tears! —
How difficult it is to deal with women! —

Why, you are beautiful, and you are clever,
And you are charming, madam. Who denies it?

METELLA. Oh, deny it a thousand times — and kiss
me!

LUCIUS. There!

METELLA. No! I am not so facile, Lucius.

LUCIUS. That's well done, too. (*Aside.*) If my
thoughts had the time,
A look like that would halt them. She's a fine
woman. . . .

Enter VOCONIUS and DAGONET.

Is this your scribe?

VOCONIUS. Ay, Cæsar.

LUCIUS. Let him wait
Within call. I've a paper presently
I would have copied quickly. A word with you.
Your pardon, madam . . .

DAGONET. Caught at last! Oh for a cap to make
me invisible! (*Looking out at balcony.*) Or even
an every-day ladder; I am a two-legged animal, but
without feathers; it's too high for a wingless fowl.

[*Withdraws upon balcony.*]

LUCIUS (*apart to VOCONIUS*). That's done, then.
. . . You are a handsome man, Voconius.

VOCONIUS. Cæsar knows not to flatter, other-
wise —

LUCIUS. See you Metella yonder? . . . How her
neck
Curves like an angry swan's!

VOCONIUS. A lovely cloud, —
Rainbowed and opal-smouldering.

LUCIUS. Is she not
A prize for princes?

VOCONIUS. I envy you, my lord.

LUCIUS. Oh, fear no jealousy from me, Voconius.
Take her, if you can win her. . . . Pardon us, madam.
Cæsar is more a slave than all his slaves;
His tyrant is the State. What news, Voconius?
How goes the battle at the barrier?

VOCONIUS. Like two strong wrestlers locked in a
mad grip
That budge not though their bones cry, — like the sea

That breaks unyielding on the unyielding cliff!
The messengers come momentarily, but bring
No news of change. . Bursa would have you forth
Thinking your presence may inspire the troops.

LUCIUS. I will put on my armor presently.

[*Looks off at balcony.*]

METELLA. It must be a brave sight.

VOCONIUS. Would you look on?

I can convey you to a place of vantage
Whence you may see all and yet be as safe
As at the theatre. It will be rare.

METELLA. I am not in the mood.

VOCONIUS. Oh, madam, come.

It will divert you — at the least, it may be
Some pleasure to you that 't is much to me.

METELLA. Why, you may go.

VOCONIUS. Oh, madam, I but go

To pick the crumbs up of your scattered glances.

METELLA. Speak low, lest Cæsar hear.

VOCONIUS. A fig for Cæsar!

METELLA. Why, that's a man. Well then, I'll go
with you.

[*Exeunt METELLA and VOCONIUS.*]

LUCIUS. Ho, there! Attend me. . . .

Enter two Attendants.

She is beautiful.

I wonder why she does not stir me now. . . .

Go, bid my armor-bearer have my harness

In readiness . . . [*Exit an Attendant. A little later in the scene he re-enters unobtrusively.*]

Upon my soul, this Queen
Treats me right queenly. Will she never come? . . .

Enter GUENEVERE.

You give me hopes. No maiden e'er drew out
The fever of her lover's waiting longer
While she, in tremor half and half in craft,
Played witchery with her glass. You give me hopes.

GUENEVERE. The mirror of a woman is the eyes
Of all the world—including emperors.

LUCIUS. Why, every eye must be your mirror—
true—

For all eyes turn to you where'er you go.
But some are dull—a fool's thought cannot glass you;
And some are flawed—a wry heart would distort you;
And many are of too base metal made
To hang in your bedchamber.

GUENEVERE. Rather than hang
Base metal there, though with the empire gilded,
Lucretia's steel should serve.

LUCIUS. Death of my life!
Base metal, madam!

GUENEVERE. Counterfeit—it passes.

LUCIUS. Provoke me not to leave all generous
thoughts.

GUENEVERE. Spare me your generosity. You make
A merchandise of magnanimity.

LUCIUS. Remember, madam, you are in my power.

GUENEVERE. O generous, to make me think of it!

LUCIUS. Oh, how the ugly lines of scorn grow fair
When 't is your face that wears them! Ah, you make
A grace of things ungracious! You shall yet
Smooth out the wrinkle of that lithe contempt
To something gentler. You shall crook that pride,
And humble that disdain. Know you this letter? . . .
It seems you do not. Let me hold it nearer. . . .

GUENEVERE. That! . . . oh! . . .

LUCIUS. Bid me tear it . . .

GUENEVERE. Fool! fool! fool!

I knew it when I wrote it. What fiend, then,
Usurped my soul to send it? Oh, what drug,
What basilisk, what Gorgon sorceried
My judgment into stone? Are we the sport
Of something in ourselves that makes our wills
Pygmies that stand on mountain-tops and brag?
Oh! . . .

LUCIUS. Bid me tear it! . . .

GUENEVERE. I have nought to do
With what you do or do not.

LUCIUS. Drive me not
To be a tyrant where I would be kind.
Give me your hand and seal we amity
With the ashes of this telltale.

GUENEVERE. You are slow
To understand.

LUCIUS. Methinks I know you better
Than you had thought. Put off this vestal role;

I know you no Lucretia, — ts ! one more
Or less — what matter ?

GUENEVERE (*after an angry pause*). What one
matters all . . .

How should you understand me ? I have done.

LUCIUS. I have not. If you stand on faithfulness,
I'll hold you to it ; this belongs to him, then,
You are bound-to to be faithful . . . Do you take me ?
I speak of Arthur. Shall I send you to him
And ticket you with this ? . . . I do not jest.
By God's blood, I will send you to his camp
And bid my herald cry your shame at large.
God's mercy, madam, you are no such saint
To be so liberal of scorn ! . . . No speech ?
You will break silence when you see the copy
Made ready to be sent — oh, I keep this ;
But all may see it . . . Once more, bid me delay . . .
Ho, there, you writing fellow !

Enter DAGONET.

Copy this.

DAGONET (*aside*). Copy it ? Oh, Lord !

LUCIUS. Will you take it,
knave ?

DAGONET. Ay, Cæsar, ay, ay, — but my quills are
split.

LUCIUS. Fetch what he needs. [*Attendants fetch
writing materials.*]

It is not yet too late . . .

Here, rascal, take it. Well, what lack you now ?

DAGONET. Tinder to light the taper for the wax.

LUCIUS. Serve him . . . Madam, the time grows
lean apace.

You were not made for rigor. Your lush South
Of beauty's not for winter . . . Take it . . .

[DAGONET *takes letter*, LUCIUS
turns again to GUENEVERE.]

DAGONET (*recognizing the letter*). Whoop!

[*Lights it with taper.*]

LUCIUS. Be kind and bid me burn it.

[*Follows GUENEVERE'S startled look and
sees DAGONET with the burning letter.*]

LUCIUS. What! Thou — Who? . . .

DAGONET. Your only juggler, sire. Do you re-
member? . . .

[*Kneels and kisses GUENEVERE'S hand.*]

LUCIUS. Guards, ho! Hell-fire and brimstone!
Guards! . . .

Enter a Messenger, precipitately.

MESSENGER. My lord,
The enemy have burst the gates.

LUCIUS. What sayest thou?

MESSENGER. The walls are carried and the battle
wages

Along the streets. Bursa —

LUCIUS. My armor, ho!

GUENEVERE. This way, with me. [*Exeunt GUENE-
VERE and DAGONET.*]

Where is the fight-

Conduct me . . . Seize that fellow! Gone? Dam-
nation!

Find him, and hang him! . . . What's the way?
my armor! . . .

[*Exeunt all severally. Pause. Noises without.*]

VOCONIA. I asked for life, but did not know how
great

And wonderful life was.

GALAHULT. I thought that life

Was ended, and the rest mere dragging out
The dead accustomed days.

VOCONIA. I know so little,

And you so much. How can you love me?

GALAHULT. Oh,

You bring me what I thought I had lost forever,

Youth of the soul. I live in you again,

And re-discover all things. [*Kisses her.*]

VOCONIA. Kiss me again . . . [*A pause.*]

GALAHAUPT. What noise is that ! I hear the clash
of arms. [*They run to the open window-doors.*]

VOCONIA. Oh, oh, oh! They are battering the gates!

GALAHAUPT. They storm the palace! God, to be
cooped up here!

VOCONIA. But with me, love . . .

GALAHAULT. You are my new life — look!
You would not have me less a soldier. Heavens!
Look, look, I say. [*The noises increase.*]

VOCONIA. They are bursting the gates in . . .

GALAHAULT. And I not there! Oh, some way to
escape! . . .

VOCONIA. The gates give way! . . . Ah! . . . Ah!
 . . . Ah! Who is he
With the yellow hair, that lifts the gates and hurls
them
Like rotten wood? . . .

GALAHAULT. Launcelot! Launcelot! . . .

VOCONIA. Oh, it is glorious! . . .

GALAHAULT. How escape? . . .

 How join them? . . .

VOCONIA. You have no arms.

GALAHAULT. The dead shall give
me arms.

VOCONIA. Look, look again! . . . Ah! . . . Oh,
horrible! . . .

See, Bursa comes now . . . Ah, look, Launcelot —

GALAHAULT. They are but a handful that have
dashed ahead . . .

They will be overcome —

VOCONIA. Not he! He fights

As if some madness hurled him.

GALAHAULT. Help me reach him.

You know the palace. Is there no way to descend

But through the Romans?

VOCONIA.

Follow me. This way.

[*Exeunt into the inner rooms of GUENEVERE. Uproar in garden, and on staircase, bursting finally into the apartment.*]

Enter several fighting. Then BURSA and LAUNCELOT in hand to hand struggle, with battle-axes. Cries, tumult. The Romans increase in numbers and drive out the Britons. LAUNCELOT is wounded. He reels back a moment, then returns to the combat, and BURSA is slain.

ROMANS (*dispersedly*). Seize him! . . . Take him prisoner! . . . He is alone. It is Launcelot . . .

[*They rush upon LAUNCELOT in a body, but stagger back under the blows of his battle-axe and huddle together at the door-way, ready to escape. Several are wounded and one slain. As they stand, wavering, in the door, LAUNCELOT, growing weak from the bleeding of his wound, lets fall his arm to his side, dropping his battle-axe, and then half falls to the floor.*]

A ROMAN. He is wounded. Quick, a surgeon!
Let us take him alive. It is their general.

[*Exeunt several.*]

LAUNCELOT (*aside, faintly*). Where is she? . . .

ANOTHER ROMAN. Yield you, rescue or no rescue.

THIRD ROMAN. Your men are beaten back.

FIRST ROMAN. You are left alone.

[*LAUNCELOT faints.*]

Those who had gone out re-enter with a Surgeon
SURGEON. He is faint from loss of blood. Quick,
bring me wine.

FIRST ROMAN. Cæsar should know. Who'll go
and seek out Cæsar?

*[Exeunt several. The Surgeon dresses
the wound, and applies bandages, with
tourniquet knot to stop bleeding.]*

SECOND ROMAN. We shall all be centurions.

Capture Launcelot! . . . *[Wine is brought.]*

SURGEON. He is coming to.

*[LAUNCELOT sits up partly and the Sur-
geon gives him wine to drink.]*

Enter LUCIUS, in armor, and Soldiers.

LUCIUS. Where is he? . . . Bind
him fast.

SURGEON. He is too weak to struggle.

LUCIUS. Bind him
fast! . . .

[LAUNCELOT is bound.]

Give him more wine to drink. I'd have him roused
Enough to speak with me.

SURGEON. He is still dazed.

[LAUNCELOT drinks.]

He must be quiet lest he bleed afresh . . . *[Holding
his pulse.]*

He is better now.

LAUNCELOT. Bound?

LUCIUS.
Leave us alone.

Clear this dirt away.
[*Exeunt Soldiers, bearing
the dead bodies.*]

So, so, Sir Launcelot!
What though your soldiers riot in my streets?
We've not done yet.

Enter VARRO.

VARRO. All's lost. The city's theirs.

LUCIUS. No! . . . No! . . . No! . . .

VARRO. Our men scatter like rats.
All's vain to rally them.

LUCIUS. The city lost?
Deny it, man, deny it. Oh! the world melts
Out of my hands like snow. No, all's not lost!
Cowards, you leave me — you betray me — Ah! —
I had no Launcelots!

VARRO. Be it so, you wrong us.
We have fought well. They sweep the streets like hail.
King Arthur, like an Ajax come again, —
I think he is a god, — I cannot kill him!
Thrice have I fought with him, and thrice — . . .
All's lost!

Remains but to secure your flight, my lord.

LUCIUS. Where shall I flee to? For the world is
his. . . .

[*To the Surgeon.*] Open this vein for me . . . An
easy death;

I have considered it, Varro. [*Suddenly and infuri-*

ate, his eye falling on LAUNCELOT.] No, not that way!

Vengeance! We will have vengeance in our ruin!
Draw up your soldiers at the garden walls
And rampart me with death. I shall be there.

[Exeunt VARRO and Surgeon.]

[GUENEVERE appears at the door of the inner rooms. Seeing first LUCIUS, and then LAUNCELOT, she stops, silent. LUCIUS breaks into an hysterical laugh, and starts sinuously, and with malign intention, toward her. LAUNCELOT strains at the cords that bind him. GUENEVERE motionless till LUCIUS has passed LAUNCELOT, who at that moment with a violent effort bursts the cords. As GUENEVERE turns to LAUNCELOT, LUCIUS with a quick movement snatches the dagger from her and flings it on the floor.]

LUCIUS. Madam, he's bound . . . and wounded.

[LAUNCELOT springs upon LUCIUS and grapples with him.]

LAUNCELOT. Roman beast!

[They wrestle towards the balcony.]

LUCIUS. Ugh! Ugh! . . . Ah! . . . Help! . . .
Ho! . . . Ae! . . . ae! . . . ae! . . .

[As they reach the doors, LAUNCELOT lifts LUCIUS bodily and rushing out upon the balcony, with the strength of fury, hurls him

down upon the paved court below. A cry of terror, like the cry of a wild beast, from LUCIUS as he disappears.]

LAUNCELOT. Rot there! I would 'twere in our
Norland woods
For the lean wolves to rend thee!

GUENEVERE. Is he slain?
Moves he? Oh —

LAUNCELOT. He will never move again.

[Groans of dismay from the garden. Then outcries. Confusion.]

Ho! . . . Ho! . . . you Romans . . .
There lies your Cæsar — such a senseless lump
His very dogs insult him! Yield you, knaves!
Now comes an Emperor that is to that
As morning to the foul glow of the Pit!
Yield you! Now come the old heroic days
When Rome was Rome and ruled by right divine
Of valor and devotion. Rejoice, cry out,
Shout “Arthur! Arthur! There’s a Cæsar indeed —
Greater than the great Julius — who shall found
An empire greater still!” . . . Throw ope the gates,
Rush out, and make your peace.

[Turns to GUENEVERE. Tumult without, then quiet. GUENEVERE stretches out her hands and comes towards him, breaking into overflow of joyous silvery laughter. She stops at the steps that rise to the doors open-

ing on the balcony and he comes down to her, laughing too, for sheer joy. As he reaches her at the steps he reels, weak with loss of blood, and falls.]

My wound ! I am spent.
Tie up this knot again. . . . Undo my armor. . . .

[She takes off his helmet and corselet, and re-dresses the wound deftly and quickly.]

GUENEVERE. So wounded, Launcelot, . . . and to
outthrew

The scarce-breathed Lucius !

LAUNCELOT. It is but a slash.

The bleeding makes me weak. But oh ! oh ! oh !

The victory, the victory, Guenevere ! . . .

Since last night it is thrice a thousand years,

And every year a hell.

GUENEVERE. A Lapland night,

LAUNCELOT. Ne'er morning dawned so slow.

GUENEVERE. But now, but now — !

LAUNCELOT. Now we are past all ills. . . . And I
could thank

Some truculent Roman if he brake in on us

And slew us ere they come. Ay, to cease thus,

Together, at the height !

GUENEVERE. No, not to cease,

But to *be* thus, forever !

LAUNCELOT. Ah, to know

You are no longer in that tiger's clutch,

I — I — ha, ha, ha, ha !

GUENEVERE. Speak not of him, —
A fool that met a fool's fate. . . . Hear the bells! . . .

[*Chimes of bells begin to ring all over the city ;
at first, those faint and far away, then
nearer and louder.*]

How like a fleet of shining pinnaces
They sail upon the air. . . . Hark! clear and
sweet! . . .

It is our bridal that they ring, and we
Are wed anew to-day.

LAUNCELOT. Nearer and nearer
They swell with joy. They ease my heart of joy.

GUENEVERE. Oh, I think they are alive! I think
They are glad with our gladness! They rejoice
That life is fair and that the sun is sweet
And all the little winds are soft with joy. . . .
How they peal forth! . . .

LAUNCELOT. Victory! Guenevere!
It is the churches ringing the *Te Deum*!
Rome hails her victor — and her emperor!

[*Shouts and noises in the garden.*]

GUENEVERE. Hear them cry out!

LAUNCELOT. Is it their men
or ours? [*A pause.*]

GUENEVERE. Launcelot!

LAUNCELOT. Guenevere!

GUENEVERE. Hark! . . .

LAUNCELOT. They are on the stair.
[*A pause.*]

GUENEVERE. There's some one at the door. . . .

Enter ARTHUR. A pause.

ARTHUR. Ho, are you here? . . .
Lady, you are the Empress of the world
To-day. What, wounded, Launcelot? Not badly?

LAUNCELOT. 'Tis nothing, Arthur.

ARTHUR. God's my life, 't is much,
For you are pale with it. But it becomes you.
Crowns are not won with kisses. . . . Well, we've
won . . .

There's salve for all our cuts — eh, Launcelot?

*Enter LIONEL, DINADAN, GALAHAULT, and
Knights.*

DINADAN. Ho, ho! a prize! we have taken our
own general.
We found Sir Galahault in the streets, half-armed,
Fighting as a starved man falls to victuals. Mass,
[*Thumping him on the back.*]

I think he's only twenty.

GALAHAULT (*to GUENEVERE*). Where is Voconia?

GUENEVERE. Yonder. [*Exit GALAHAULT.*]

He has taken Rome the happiest way.

ARTHUR. What, by her maidens? That's a
knight's part, too.

LIONEL. The city's mad with joy. Our partisans
Build bonfires in the streets, and our late foes
Forget their enmity and cry as loud

As our own men for Arthur. "Peace" is the shout;
The frenzy spreads like a contagion.

DINADAN. Yes,
They'll all be drunk by night, Pagan or Christian.

Enter BORS, ECTOR, and others, with VARRO.

LAUNCELOT. Varro? . . . Arthur, this Roman is
my friend.

ARTHUR. Let him go free. (*To VARRO.*) I crave
you for my service. . . .

BORS. The people throng the churches, where they
sing

Te Deums for your victory.

ECTOR. We passed
Bands of monks chanting in the squares.

BORS. They say
The Pope himself comes hither with his blessing.

Re-enter GALAHAULT, with VOCONIA, and DAGONET in an improvised costume. Laughter at DAGONET'S entrance.

DAGONET. You laugh, masters. But this is the
badge of a free man. I have put off slavery with my
Roman clothes. These are the spoils of war. I have
looted the ladies' apartments. My cap was a work-
basket; my bauble a distaff and a doll's head, artisti-
cally united. I despoiled the female slaves of them.
My doublet is patched together of ladies' mantles, and
my hose — oh, la, la!

GUENEVERE. Tut, tut! You are a silly Fool. Go to!

ARTHUR. We must soon turn our steps again to
Britain;

And one of you must rule for us in Rome.

Who should this be but he whose arm was chief
To throne us here? You all do know the love
I bear him . . . but you shall confess me just
When I name Launcelot.

[*Cheers.*]

LAUNCELOT. Oh, not me, my King!

[*A pause. Chanting without, in the garden.*]

ARTHUR. You shall be honored only as you please
And name your own prize.

LAUNCELOT. This is my prize, Arthur —
To see you here in triumph.

ARTHUR. That 's well said.
I understand you. It is nobly felt.
We stay together, then. . . . Well, Galahault,
You are half Roman, as it seems, already, —
What is the throng that breaks upon us here?

[*The scene crowds with spectators, Romans and
Britons. The chanting of the monks draws
nearer in the corridor.*]

MONKS (*without*). *Salvum fac populum tuum, Domine **
et benedic hæreditati tuæ
*Et rege eos, et extolle illos * usque in æternum.*
*Per singulos dies * benedicimus te.*
*Et laudamus nomen tuum in sæculum * et in sæculum*
sæculi,
*Dignare, Domine, die isto * sine peccato nos custodire.*

Enter a procession of monks, in white cowls,

chanting; then acolytes, and the POPE, in a cope of cloth of gold, with the tiara on his head.

Miserere nostri, Domine * miserere nostri,
Fiat misericordia tua, Domine, super nos * quemadmodum
speravimus in te.

In te, Domine, speravi * non confundar in æternum.

[As they cease chanting, the POPE raises his hands in benediction. All kneel.]

THE POPE. God's blessing lie upon you, Christian knights,

And upon thee, my son, deliverer
Of his church and his people. . . . King of Britain,
Be thou God's holy Emperor of Rome.
Behold the Iron Crown! I, being God's vicar
Over the church, crown thee to be his vicar
Over the world. . . . Behold your Cæsar, Rome!

LAUNCELOT (*rising*). Long live the Emperor!

ALL (*rising*). Long live the Emperor!

ARTHUR (*Setting the crown, for an instant, upon GUENEVERE'S head*). Long live the Empress!

ALL. Ho! Long live the Empress!

Enter a Messenger.

MESSENGER. Letters, my lord, from Merlin. . . .
This for the queen.

[He delivers the letters, which ARTHUR and GUENEVERE, severally, open and scan.]

GUENEVERE (*apart to LAUNCELOT*). All's well with him.

CURTAIN.

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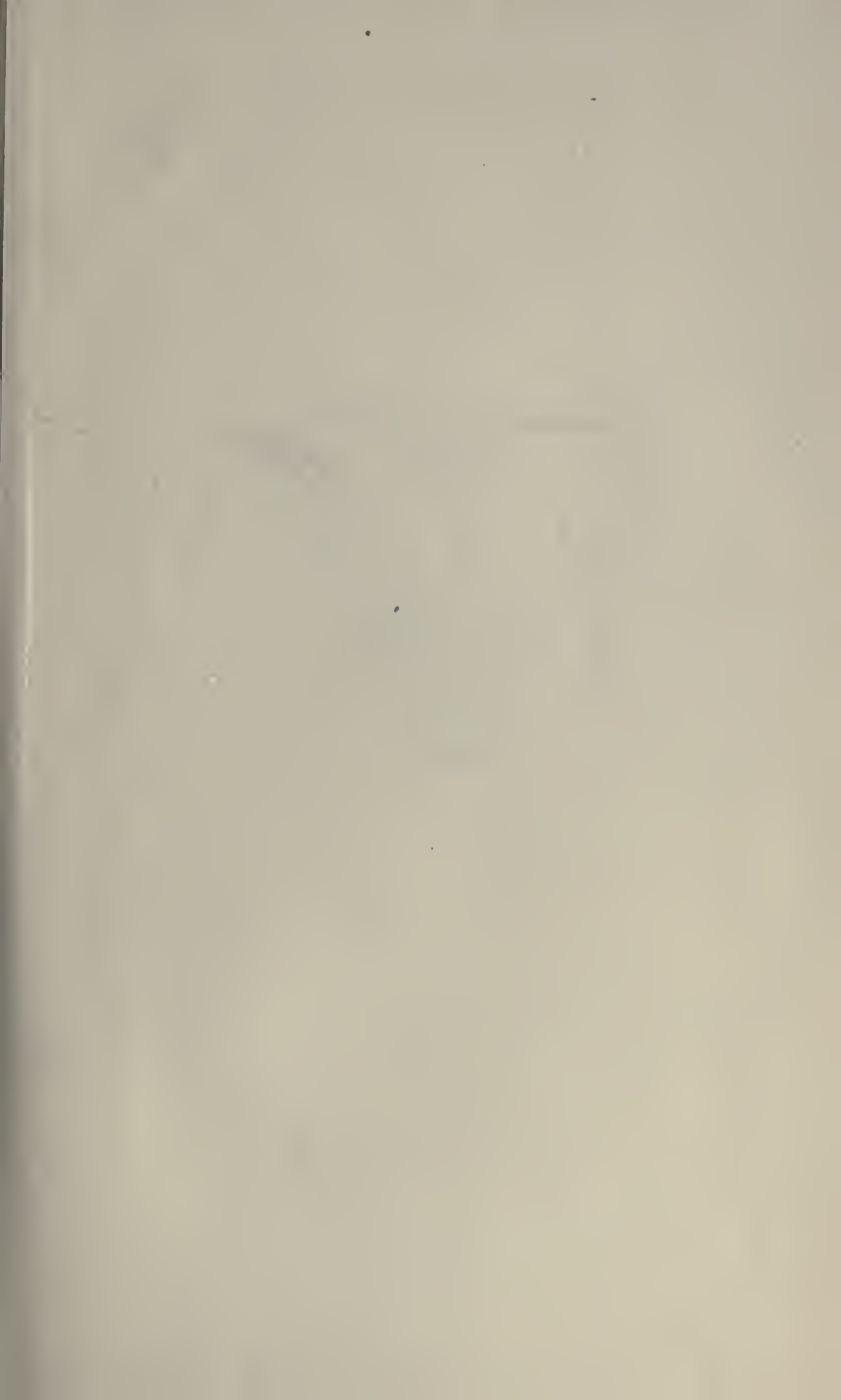
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